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EPISODES OF FRENCH HISTORY

DURING THE

CONSULATE AND THE FIRST EMPIRE.

Julia S. H.

BY MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF "COURT AND REIGN OF FRANCIS I.," "LIFE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS,"
"LOUIS XIV., AND THE COURT OF FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY," ETC., ETC., ETC.

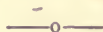


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P R E F A C E .



THE contents of the present Volume were obtained while the Compiler was engaged in writing a royal biography which, from feelings of self-respect, she subsequently declined to complete. No attempt has been made to arrange the sketches in chronological order, but rather to diversify their interest and subject-matter as much as possible. History is the great drama of the world; but we never thoroughly comprehend its whole value until we have studied, not only its main outline, but also its details. Here are some of those details:—Hidden motives for public measures; indications of character which serve to explain actions otherwise apparently incongruous; glimpses of a past which was not less wonderful in its inner workings than in its outward demonstration; and, finally, a few “stray leaves” which have appeared to be well worth gathering up.

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EPISODES OF FRENCH HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

A CONSULAR "LIONNE."

THE Empress Josephine, after she had been widowed by the axe of the guillotine (beneath which the head of her first husband the Vicomte Beauharnais had fallen during the Revolution), found herself on her own restoration to liberty, compelled by her isolated and almost destitute condition, to accept as her companions and associates many of those who had been her fellow-prisoners in the Carmelite monastery, however exceptional their antecedents were known to have been. Among these the most celebrated was the famous Madame Tallien, to whom the warm-hearted creole became affectionately attached. This lady, who was both beautiful and witty, was the daughter of Senhor Cabarrus, the court-banker at Madrid; who, while she was yet a mere girl, accompanied her father to Bordeaux, where, at the age of fourteen, she married the Marquis de Fontenay, a councillor in the parliament of that city, a man of mature age and grave habits, from whom she was afterwards divorced. When the Revolution broke out she became one of its most zealous

partisans; but, disgusted by the excesses that she was compelled to witness, she endeavored to escape to Spain, for which crime she was arrested, and brought before the Pro-Consul Tallien who was then at Bordeaux, commissioned by Robespierre to establish the Reign of Terror in that district.

When she was introduced into his presence, Tallien was so much impressed by her rich southern loveliness and her extraordinary grace, that he at once became her captive; and morality being by no means the leading virtue of the time, Madame de Fontenay soon responded to his passion. The tyrant of the Revolution was the mere slave of the woman whom he loved; and, to her honor be it said, that she exerted her influence over him only to enforce mercy for the condemned, and to arrest the waste of human life. On the recall of Tallien by the Convention, she accompanied him to Paris, where she was thrown into prison, accused of having rendered him lax in the performance of his duties; but the death of Robespierre released her; and it is even asserted that the determination of the Pro-Consul to save her life, hastened the event which delivered France from the fangs of that human tiger.

A short time subsequently she became the wife of Tallien, but the marriage proved an unhappy one, and she was a second time divorced.

In 1805 Madame Tallien gave her hand to the Comte de Caranhan, afterwards Prince de Chimay.* For a

* When some one informed Tallien that his *cidevant* wife had become Princesse de Chimay, he replied sarcastically: "It matters little; the world will know her only as Madame Tallien, were she ten times Princesse de *Chimère*."

considerable period Madame Tallien enjoyed an immense vogue in Paris, and possessed great influence over the public mind; but her repeated divorces, and the worse than questionable principles of her female associates, so revolted Napoleon that, long before he became Emperor of the French, he would never admit her to his court.

Whatever may have been the truth or the falsehood of the popular reports regarding Madame Tallien, one thing is at least certain, that the affection with which she had inspired Josephine was exceeded by the disgust entertained towards her by Bonaparte himself. While he remained a mere General Officer, he supported the intimacy between the two ladies with as much patience as he could command; but he had no sooner established himself at the Luxembourg as First Consul, than he positively forbade his wife ever again to receive her friend. Nor was Madame Tallien the only heroine of the time whose name was erased from the visiting-list of Madame Bonaparte; but in no other instance did the latter feel the prohibition so painfully. Vainly did she entreat, expostulate, and even weep; a cold and stern refusal to accede to her request was the only reply she could obtain, and she was compelled to submit.

The position of Josephine was at once a painful and an onerous one; as, not satisfied with seeing each other almost daily, the two ladies had been in the habit of exchanging each morning those little notes of gaiety and gossip in which Frenchwomen especially delight. On the return of Bonaparte from his Egyptian campaign, the beautiful ally of his wife had been one of

the first to congratulate him on his miraculous escape from the English fleet; but he had received her elegantly-expressed compliments with a coldness which excited her indignation; although, as she conceived that it was attributable only to the arrogance of a victorious general, she merely revenged herself by saying to a friend:—

“He is an unlicked bear; but let him be as sulky as he pleases until the fit is over, when he will see me so constantly that he will become accustomed to me; and if he refuses to speak to me, so be it. I prefer the conversation of his wife.”

Madame Tallien was, however, mistaken in her calculations. The Luxembourg, from the period when her friend took up her abode there with the First Consul, was closed against her; a fact of which Madame Bonaparte herself was ignorant, until, having ventured on one occasion to pay her a stolen visit, she was informed of it to her extreme astonishment; and having made inquiries on the subject on her return to the palace, she was assured that the principal valet, whose duty it was to announce all visitors, had received a personal order from the First Consul that Madame Tallien was never to be admitted. The lady persisted, however, with all the pertinacity of a spoiled beauty; and precisely on the morning when Bonaparte had so resolutely adhered to his determination that she should never again find herself in the society of his wife, she arrived once more at the Luxembourg, at so early an hour, that the usher not having as yet taken up his post, she was admitted by another servant, and conducted to the presence of Madame Bonaparte.

Still weeping over what she considered as the harshness and cruelty of her husband in depriving her of her best friend, Josephine, on seeing the radiant Spaniard enter her apartment, was overwhelmed with astonishment and terror. Unaccustomed and, indeed, unable as she was to conceal her feelings at any time, Madame Tallien at once perceived that something very painful had taken place; and, hastening to her side, she clasped both her hands in her own, exclaiming anxiously:—

“My love, what has happened?”

Madame Bonaparte could not reply; her sobs stifled her, and the tears rained down her pale cheeks; all that she could do was to press her friend to her heart; until, having in some degree recovered her composure, she confessed to her the cause of her grief, and described the interview which had just taken place; endeavoring, however, to attribute the resolution of the First Consul to the scandalous tongues about him rather than to his own dislike of Madame Tallien.

The Spanish blood of the visitor rushed in a crimson flood over her brow and bosom, but she affected to believe that Josephine was correct in her conclusions; and contented herself by inveighing bitterly against the slanderers by whom she had been maligned.

“Nothing can be more false;” she said vehemently; “than all the tales which have been circulated against me, and the conduct which has been attributed to me, both morally and politically. Was I to blame if after they had married me, a mere child, to a man who might have been my father (and who was, moreover, personally repugnant to me), if I refused at a more

mature age to submit to a worse than Siberian bondage? Was I to blame if I could not support life with Tallien, who, after having been the most devoted of lovers, became the most exacting and tyrannical of husbands? As regards my actions during the Revolution, let those whom I saved from the scaffold—and they were not a few—answer for me; I scorn on that subject to justify myself. No one can have a greater contempt for the verdict of the public than I have; but I am anxious to secure the good opinion of Bonaparte, and to compel him to admit that he has been led into error. I will give him proofs of this by which he cannot refuse to be convinced.”

“Dearest Therèse;” exclaimed her friend; “you could not have formed a wiser resolution. He is always generous enough to acknowledge himself in the wrong when once he feels that he is so; and if you can only succeed in showing how much his confidence has been abused, he will, I am quite sure, revoke this detestable order, and restore you to my affection.”

Having matured their plans, the two friends separated; and Madame Tallien left the Luxembourg after having arranged to return on the morrow at any hour when it might be convenient to Bonaparte to receive her, provided that his wife should succeed in inducing him to do so.

The part which Josephine was called upon to play in this little drama was anything rather than an easy one, as since his vehement passion had sobered down, the imperious nature of Bonaparte had revealed itself even to the “*bonne petite mère*,” to whom he had formerly addressed letters worthy rather of a hot-headed

school-boy than of a man who aspired to dictate the laws to Europe, and to overrun the world—letters, several of which are not the less valuable from their almost total illegibility; for never did the school-boy, to whom we have already likened him, burthen post or courier with more blurred, blotted, and bewildering missives than the conqueror of Marengo, and the fugitive of Waterloo.

Josephine possessed in an eminent degree the talent of seduction. We say this without *arrière-pensée*, for it is not here or now that we are inclined to canvass her moral character, or to discuss the episodes of her private life; we have to do with Madame Tallien, and with Madame Tallien only. Here Therèse Cabarrus is the principal figure, and Josephine de la Pagerie only a necessary accessory. Let it suffice then, that the wife of the First Consul thoroughly understood every mutation of his mind and temper; and that she was perfectly aware of the moment when her own influence was in the ascendant. She knew precisely when to flatter his vanity, and when to win him to her purpose by the blandishments and caresses which even the most iron nature cannot at all times resist. Mark Anthony lost the world for a woman; what wonder then that the Corsican adventurer was occasionally swayed by the soft tones, the sleepy glances, and the tender professions of a creole? Josephine was well aware that there was not one particle of chivalry, as regarded her own sex, in the character of her husband; but she also knew that he was always more manageable after he had indulged in an exhibition of his power before which others had been compelled to

quail, than at any other time; and she consequently resolved that she would not suffer the sun to set before she had induced him to accord the interview solicited by Madame Tallien.

At first Bonaparte felt inclined, when the subject of his wife's friend was resumed, to give loose to as much petulance and ill-humor as he had displayed in the morning; and the frown which habitually gathered upon his brow when he was displeased was already beginning to make Josephine tremble, when he suddenly recovered his serenity, and said:—

“Well, since you wish it, let her come. I will see her;” but before his wife could thank him for the concession, he had already started a new topic.

Madame Bonaparte was enchanted; she believed that he was conquered. She was deceived, however; the victory was not yet gained. On the morrow Madame Tallien arrived in full dress—as full dress was understood during the Revolution—for she wore in reality a Grecian tunic, fashioned after a drawing by Girodet, which was composed of a light and transparent material, although the interview we are about to chronicle took place in the month of November. A scarf of gold-embroidered muslin was flung loosely about her, which left her shoulders and bust almost bare; her feet, which were small and white enough for those of a nymph, instead of being imprisoned in slippers, were covered only by sandals which enhanced rather than veiled their rare beauty, and which were fastened on her instep by large brilliants; her naked arms were encircled from the shoulder to the wrists by gold bangles, enriched with antique cameos of almost fabu-

lous value ; while her head was adorned only by masses of the most luxuriant black hair, which gleamed with a rich purple hue in the light.

Accustomed as she had long been to see her friend attired in this mythological costume, Madame Bonaparte was loud in her expressions of admiration ; but after the eager words of compliment and greeting had been exchanged, she anxiously inquired the nature of the proofs with which her visitor intended to convince the somewhat intractable mind of the First Consul.

"He will require them to be clear and unanswerable ;" she said ; "for"—and it is impossible to decide what reflection caused her to pause for a moment as she sat with her eyes riveted upon the wondrous vision of loveliness before her—"he is not like other men."

"Proofs clear and unanswerable ?" smiled Madame Tallien, as she surveyed herself complacently in the mirror before which she stood, and which reflected her whole person. "Do not fear ; he shall have them ; and he will recognise their authenticity."

Josephine made no reply ; she was far from sharing in the confidence of her friend ; she began to comprehend in what the promised proofs were to consist, and she knew her husband too well to believe that they would avail.

Suddenly Bonaparte, who had given orders that he should be immediately apprised of the arrival of Madame Tallien in his wife's apartments, entered the room unannounced ; and closed the door behind him even more abruptly than he had opened it. Josephine, alarmed alike by his manner and by the expression of his countenance, took refuge in her chamber ; while the

visitor, astonished, and even terrified in her turn, rose from the sofa upon which she had been sitting beside her friend, and stood motionless before him.

“Madame,” said the First Consul gravely: “you say that you have been the victim of calumny. You have a right to be heard. Prove this to me, and you shall be justified, not only in my eyes, but in those of all France.”

The cold, commanding, and even arbitrary tone in which the assurance was uttered, and an evident consciousness of power for which she was totally unprepared, overcame as if by magic the self-reliance of the hitherto-triumphant beauty; she endeavored in vain to rally her energies; she was totally unnerved; and, accustomed as she had long been to triumph by her smiles and graces, she found herself reduced on the present occasion, to take refuge in the most common-place complaints of her calumniators.

“All this is mere verbiage, madame,” said Bonaparte, after having listened patiently until she paused; “I require positive facts—tangible proofs. You are accused of having participated in the sanguinary acts of Tallien; of having entered into the persecutions of Robespierre.”

An exclamation of indignant anger was the reply of Madame Tallien to this accusation. On this point at least she felt that she was blameless; tears of wounded feeling inundated her cheeks, and her deprecatory gesture was so eloquent and so convincing, that even the First Consul was impressed by its sincerity.

“Calm yourself;” he said, more gently than he had yet spoken; “calm yourself, madame; I am prepared to listen to your refutation of this charge.”

"I can and will refute it, monsieur," she replied emphatically; and the task was, in point of fact, an easy one. She enumerated those whom she had saved; she named the numerous victims whom she had preserved, not only from proscription but even from death; those whom she had preserved from ruin; and invoked a crowd of witnesses, who would, as she declared with all the trustfulness of a generous spirit, not fail to do her justice on such an emergency.

There was no room for doubt; so far she had conquered; but her ordeal—and it was a fiery one—was not yet over.

"So far, so well, madame;" said the First Consul; "you have decidedly satisfied me that as regards your conduct at Bordeaux towards the victims of a mistaken policy, your enemies have cruelly wronged you. I am glad to find that I have been deceived; you prevented all the evil in your power; you even did all the good that it was possible for you to do; and you have been wrongfully associated with the atrocities so justly attributed to your husband. Enough of this accusation therefore; and now let us pass on to the others."

The others! The modern Cæsar had, indeed, by those two simple words, tendered the deadly viper to the modern Cleopatra. Enough, that after a long and painful discussion, during which neither the loveliness, the disclaimers, nor the entreaties of the fair and frail creature before him, sufficed to shake the resolution of Bonaparte; he said emphatically:—

"Madame, the wife of Cæsar must not be suspected, even unjustly; and mine can admit into her society only individuals who are fortunate enough to be free

from all fear of calumny. This circumstance will suffice to prove to you that she will henceforward be compelled to deprive herself of the honor of receiving you until—”

“Monsieur;” exclaimed Madame Tallien; “you appear to forget that Josephine de Beauharnais, and even Madame Bonaparte—”

“Silence, madame!” thundered out the First Consul; “I did not seek to dilate upon your conduct; you forced the task upon me; and I have been compelled to convince you that you would have done better had you not enforced upon me the necessity of proving to you that I had nothing to learn either of Madame de Fontenay or Madame Tallien. We will prolong this interview no longer. I am sorry that I cannot display more courtesy towards a lady, but the world has its eyes upon me.—Farewell, madame.”

The voice of Bonaparte softened as he ceased speaking, and his look lost its sternness as he contemplated the state of agitation and humiliation to which the proud beauty was reduced; but Madame Tallien saw nothing, felt nothing, save the mortifying position in which she had been placed by an overweening vanity, which had induced her to believe that the man who had suffered himself to be subjugated by the indolent graces of a creole, would find her own glowing loveliness irresistible, and a sufficient apology for her more than equivocal antecedents.

As he left the room, the First Consul closed the door with a studied violence which apprised his wife of his departure, and she hastened to rejoin her friend.

It was their last familiar interview. The future

Princesse de Chimay was extended almost lifeless upon a couch, where she had thrown herself as Bonaparte disappeared.

Josephine did not ask a question, there was no necessity for words. Crushed and humbled by a man whom she both hated and despised, and whom she had only sought to conciliate from affection for his wife, Madame Tallien, forgetting all her pride, wept bitterly over her own degradation; while the tears of Josephine fell thick and fast as she clasped her in her arms. It was a bitter hour for both; and who shall say what visions of the past swept across the mind of each as they thus bent under one common grief—the cell of the Carmelites—the saloons of Barras—but we will not follow them in their eventful reminiscences; enough, that as they sat there side by side, one the divorced wife of two husbands, the other the honored consort of the most powerful man in France, before whom crowned kings had already bowed, and nations trembled, there was that in either heart which could not fail to whisper by how small a chance their destinies might have been reversed.

The chronicles of female life do not afford the least startling details of that frightful volume which contains the records of the Revolution!

CHAPTER II.

AN EVENING AT LA MALMAISON.

LONG previous to the period at which Napoleon I. became Emperor of the French, the château of la Malmaison—despite all the additions which had been made to it since its acquisition by Madame Bonaparte during the Egyptian campaign—had, like the dwelling of Socrates, become too narrow to accommodate the crowd of courtiers by whom it was thronged; and accordingly the official country residence of the First Consul was established at St. Cloud; while la Malmaison was devoted to the reception of his relatives, and those personal friends who were peculiarly honored with his confidence.

Under the Empire this arrangement was continued; and Napoleon was accustomed, then and there, to forget for awhile the monarch in the man, and to dispense with the cumbrous trammels of an etiquette which the earlier habits of his life necessarily tended to render more than commonly irksome.

It was especially in the evening, when the cares and duties of the day were at an end, that the Emperor, surrounded by a chosen circle, either conversed without restraint, or related anecdotes connected with his own wonderful career, in a brief, emphatic, and even dramatic manner, which riveted the attention of his lis-

teners. It is well known that Napoleon prided himself on his talent as a *conteur*; and that he seldom required much entreaty to fall back upon his stirring and varied memories, and to afford to his hearers partial and mysterious glimpses of men and events which must otherwise have remained unguessed at.

On one occasion, when the party comprised only certain members of the Imperial family, and the more confidential individuals of their respective households, the Duke of Wurtemberg chanced to be mentioned; upon which the Emperor uttered a warm eulogium on that prince, which he concluded by inquiring if it were correct that the Elector of Wurtemberg really did, as he assumed to do, trace his descent from a Mayor of the Palace of Clovis, named Eymerich?

“No, sire;” replied M. d’Aubesson, one of his chamberlains, celebrated for his antiquarian researches; “such a pretension is altogether unfounded, as all is mere fable regarding the Electoral House of Wurtemberg, beyond the eleventh century. Its recognised founder, Conrad II., was the ancestor of a line of princes who were equally distinguished as rulers and as warriors; but it was only towards the close of the fifteenth century that the Countship of Wurtemberg was erected into a duchy by the Emperor Maximilian; when Count Eberhard, having subjected to his authority a part of Suabia, solicited the title, for which he moreover paid three hundred thousand florins.”

“No bad bargain for Maximilian;” said Napoleon, inhaling a huge pinch of snuff; “Proceed, *M. le Généalogiste*.”

“The newly-made duke remained the vassal of

Austria, as his father had been before him ;” continued the chamberlain ; “ although thenceforward he became Duke of Wurtemberg and Leck, and grand standard-bearer of the Empire. It was not until the reign of the Emperor Rodolphe II. that his descendants shook off the Austrian yoke, and that the Duchy of Wurtemberg became a fief of Rome ; with the sole reservation that, in the event of the ducal house becoming extinct, it was to revert to its original master. Consequently, it is only from that period that the princes of Wurtemberg have exercised an independent sovereignty.”

“ I have since added a jewel to their crown ;” remarked the Emperor thoughtfully, as he rose, and began to pace the floor slowly, with his hands behind him, according to his usual habit ; “ I have caused it to be admitted into the Electoral College. Perhaps—How old is the present king, M. d’Aubesson ?”

“ He is far from being a young man, sire ; in fact, he is now seventy years of age. Frederick William was born in 1734 ; and in 1780 he married the Princess Caroline of Brunswick-Wolfenbuttel, who died on the 27th of September, 1788.”

“ Aye ;” said Napoleon, suddenly pausing in his walk and confronting the speaker ; “ Frederick William, King of Wurtemberg, is a widower.”

Nothing could be more simple than these words, but there was something so peculiar in the tone in which they were uttered, that for a moment no one spoke ; at length, however, Josephine, whose curiosity was aroused by the mysterious manner of her husband, roused herself from her recumbent position on the sofa, where she had been reclining in all the graceful indo-

lence of her creole nature, and asked in her low, sweet voice :—

“ What have you to tell us, Bonaparte ?”

The Emperor smiled, took another long pinch of snuff, and then, resuming his former position, with his back to the fireplace, and his eyes fixed on the beautiful questioner, he said emphatically :—

“ Listen. On the 4th of October, 1788, and at precisely 8 o'clock in the morning, a man made his appearance at the residence of M. Diedrich, the principal magistrate of the city of Strasbourg. The servant who announced him was as pale as a corpse, and trembled in every limb. ‘ What is the matter with you, Franck ?’ ” asked his master.

“ ‘ Sir,’ stammered the valet.

“ ‘ Answer me instantly !’

“ ‘ Sir, it is the public executioner.’

“ ‘ Desire him to come in, and then leave us ;’ was the calm reply.

“ The headsman of Strasbourg ;” pursued Napoleon ; “ was, despite his horrible profession, a man of exemplary character ; mild in temper, of good morals, pious, and charitable. He was, moreover, a clever surgeon, and very expert in reducing fractures and setting broken limbs ; services which he never refused to render to those who applied to him for assistance ; a circumstance which, as you will readily understand, had acquired for him a species of popularity among the lower classes, who pitied without despising him ; and, by a singular anomaly, respected him even while his presence never failed to inspire a terror which they could not overcome.”

Josephine shuddered, and drew her shawl more closely about her. She was, as is well known, exceedingly superstitious; and her attention was thoroughly aroused.

“When Franck had closed the door behind him;” continued Napoleon; “this man moved a pace or two forward; and then, as was customary, knelt down. The expression of his face was serious, but calm and decided.

“‘What want you with me, my master?’ inquired M. Diedrich.

“‘I obey the promptings of my conscience, *monseigneur* ;’ was the reply; ‘I seek to fulfil a duty. Condescend therefore, I entreat of you, to receive my declaration, and to take it down in writing. The circumstance which I am about to reveal is important; do not then omit a detail, for I feel that it is only by a complete and clear understanding of the facts that my agency in the unhappy event can be justified.’

“This preface naturally excited the curiosity of the magistrate; who, having seated himself at his desk, desired the executioner to tell his tale.

“‘About a week since;’ commenced the man, still kneeling; ‘that is, *monseigneur*, at one o’clock in the morning of the 27th September last, I was in bed in the lone house given to me by the city, when I heard a loud knocking at the outer door. My old house-keeper, who had been awakened by the noise, had already gone to inquire into the cause of the disturbance, and had ultimately opened it, believing that my services were required, as is frequently the case, by some one who was suffering from an accident; while,

acting under the same impression, I hastened to put on my clothes. Soon, however, I became aware that the poor helpless old woman was struggling with some persons who were threatening to shoot her. "Kill me if you will;" I heard her say; "but do not harm my master." "We shall do him no injury;" was the reply; "we mean him none. On the contrary, he will be well paid if he consents to do what we require; but if he values his life he *must* do so, or take the consequences upon himself." By this time, *monseigneur*, I was dressed; and I was about to go down stairs to ascertain what was required of me, when two men in masks rushed into my room, which chanced at that moment to be flooded with moonlight. In an instant I procured a lamp, and demanded to know their business; nor do I seek to deny that I was considerably agitated when I saw a brace of pistols pointed at my head and breast, as I began to apprehend that I was about to become the victim of their violence. From the isolated situation of my dwelling I was aware that I could hope for no help from without—and even had it been otherwise, he added mournfully; 'who would have risked his life, or even his reputation, to rescue the city-headsman. As a last resource, therefore, I entreated my mysterious visitors to spare my life; alleging, and with truth, that I had never injured a human being save in the fulfilment of my onerous office. "Your life is in no danger;" was the assurance which I received in reply to my supplication; "on condition that you implicitly obey our orders; but, should you hesitate, even for an instant, you will not see another dawn. Select the best and sharpest of your weapons; allow us quietly to blind-

fold you; remain silent, and follow us." As the pistols were still pointed towards me, resistance was useless; and I was compelled to submit. When a thick handkerchief had been carefully and skillfully bound over my eyes, I was lifted into a carriage, and seated between the two strangers; who had no sooner warned my terrified housekeeper that should she mention to any one, be it whom it might, the event which had just taken place, my life would be the forfeit of her indiscretion, than the horses were urged into a gallop; and, powerless as a child, I could only offer up a silent prayer for protection and support. I could not form the faintest idea of the direction in which we were travelling; I could only calculate that the journey occupied eighteen or twenty hours. At its close I was lifted out of the carriage with the same precaution as I had been placed in it; and then, each of my companions grasping one of my arms, I was hurried forward. After walking on a level surface for several minutes, we ascended a flight of stairs, which, from the echoing of our footsteps, I am convinced must have been both wide and lofty; and, finally, we reached a spacious saloon where the bandage was removed from my eyes. It was still daylight, but the sun was about to set, which satisfied me that my calculation of time had been a correct one. An abundant and luxurious meal was placed before me, but I remarked the almost total absence of wine from the table, as my long and rapid journey, and the pressure of the handkerchief across my forehead, had produced upon me an almost agonising thirst.

When the darkness closed in I was desired to arm myself with the weapon which I had previously

been directed to select, and to hold myself ready to decapitate the person whom I had been conveyed thither to execute ; but, even unhappily accustomed as I had been for years to fulfil my dreary duties under the sanction of the law ; and, aware as I could not fail to be from the first, of the purpose for which my presence was required, now that the moment of trial had actually arrived my whole soul revolted at what I at once felt to be a murder ; and consequently, with as much energy as I could command, I refused to obey. “Decide promptly,” said a voice, which I then heard for the first time ; and there was a cruel calmness in its every accent which chilled my very blood. “Your refusal will not save the culprit, and you will instantly share her fate.”

“It was then a woman whom I was about to launch into eternity ! Oh, *monseigneur*, you would have pitied even *me* at that moment—a woman who, for aught I could tell, might be guiltless of all crime, and the mere victim of another’s hate. Vainly, however, did I protest and entreat ; I was compelled to yield to a force which I was unable to resist—the sin was heavy on my soul, but I had no alternative. My sword was placed in my hand ; a black veil was thrown over my head ; and I was forced onward through several apartments, evidently of great size. At length my guide stopped in an immense hall ; the veil was removed, and I saw before me, in the centre of the vast and chilling space, a scaffold about three feet in height, upon which rested a block covered with black velvet, while a thick layer of red saw-dust was strewn on the uncarpeted floor. I trembled in every limb. Never

throughout my whole career had I been so utterly unmanned. Whose life was I about to take? What fearful and irremediable crime was I about to commit? I had but little time to ask myself these questions, for a few seconds only had elapsed since my own entrance into that fatal hall when the victim was borne towards the scaffold in the arms of several men. It was a woman of unusual height, and of the most dazzling fairness; her luxuriant hair, of pale auburn, was confined by a scarf of black crape; she was uncovered to the waist, and the rest of her body was thrust into a black velvet sack which was tied under her feet, thus leaving only her bust exposed. Her hands were bound together with a cord of purple silk, and she was closely masked. The wretched woman uttered no shriek, no supplication, which added to the horror of the spectacle; this mute despair, as I then considered it, being strange and unnatural; but she had scarcely been lifted on to the scaffold, when I discovered that she was closely gagged! The men who held her, eight or ten in number, had no sooner laid her down upon the scaffold than they withdrew a few paces—their wretched victim bent her head unresistingly upon the block—and in another instant all was over.

“ ‘ Pity me, *monseigneur*, for assuredly a grievous crime was consummated by my hand; and ere long I look to learn that the courts of Europe will be thrown into mourning.’ ”

“ ‘ What ensued?’ demanded M. Diedrich.

“ ‘ My frightful office done,’ pursued the headsman; ‘ I was not even allowed time to wipe the blood from

my sword ; another performed that duty for me ; while I was hastily conducted back to the saloon where food had been before provided for me ; and where I now found the table crowded with the rarest wines. I seated myself for an instant in order to regain composure, but I was too sick at heart to avail myself of the proffered refreshments ; and in a short time my masked companions and myself were once more in the carriage. We travelled on without halting, save to change horses at the several stages where relays had evidently been awaiting us, and where we were never detained beyond a few minutes, throughout that night and part of the following day ; and in about twenty hours, as before, we stopped in front of my own house, where I was assisted to alight, and a canvass bag containing two hundred louis was placed in my hands.—I have brought them with me, *monseigneur*, that you may make whatever use of them you think best. I was then warned never to reveal any circumstance connected with the event in which I had been so unwillingly and fatally an actor, on peril of my life ; and assured that if I obeyed this injunction, my silence should be richly compensated : “ while if, on the contrary, you seek to penetrate a mystery in which you cannot have an interest, and to which you can never obtain a clue,” added one of my companions ; “ the very attempt will prove your own destruction, as well as that of those to whom you have been rash enough to confide your secret.” With this assurance the strangers drove off, leaving me standing in the road. I waited a short time, listening to the sound of the receding wheels ; and then, as it died away in the dis-

tance, I withdrew the handkerchief, and joyfully crossed the threshold of my own home.

“ ‘I have now told you all, *monseigneur*. You know every detail of the mysterious and tragical history with which my conscience was so over-burthened that I could no longer sustain its weight alone. If I have offended against the law, I must submit to pay the penalty of my crime; but, should you feel that I only yielded to an insurmountable necessity, suffer me to hope that I may not forfeit the protection and favor which I have for many years struggled to merit by counterbalancing the hateful duties of my office, by deeds of charity towards my fellow-creatures.’ ”

“ And what said M. Diedrich ? ” gasped out Josephine, upon whom the dramatic effect given to the narrative by the manner of the Emperor had produced so strong an impression that she could not conceal her emotion; “ Surely he could not condemn the unhappy man ? ”

“ M. Diedrich, ” replied Napoleon, “ had listened with an interest equal to your own to the revelations of the headsman; but when the latter drew the money from his bosom and held it towards him, he became alarmed. It had at once been evident to him that the suspicion of the man was a correct one; and that the individual who had been put to death was no common victim. Instigated, therefore, by this conviction, and by no means indifferent to the threat that any recipient of the formidable secret would share the fate of him who had revealed it, he refused to risk the responsibility of accepting such a charge; and desired that not only the money should be retained by its present owner, but also that he should not divulge to any one

the fact of his having mentioned its existence to himself.

“‘Be it as you will, *monseigneur*,’ said his visitor; ‘I shall, in that case, expend it in masses for the victim who fell by my hand, and in alms to the poor. It is only by doing so that I can regain peace of mind and conscience.’ He then signed the deposition that he had made, and withdrew.

“M. Diedrich was no sooner alone than he placed this extraordinary document under cover, and despatched it by a courier to the Baron de Breteuil, who was at that period Prime Minister. A fortnight elapsed ere he received any reply; but at the end of that time a packet was delivered to him by the Governor of Strasbourg, which contained these words: ‘Sir, I have submitted to His Majesty the communication which you addressed to me, and I have been honored by the command of the King, to express his desire that the person in question shall retain the amount which was bestowed on him; and to inform you that he will receive a second sum of the same value, provided he maintain perfect silence on all that has occurred.’”

“But”—commenced the Empress.

Napoleon smiled.

“Well?” he said interrogatively.

“But”—repeated Josephine; “we are not surely to infer that the King”—

“Madame,” interposed Napoleon, impressively, “I am about to conclude my tale, and perhaps to give you the key to it. Such events as that which I have just related are more common in the history of courts than the uninitiated would apprehend; and, unfortunately,

the fact is never known until the evil is beyond remedy."

"Good heavens, Bonaparte! Why do you tell us such horrid stories, and compel us to believe them?" exclaimed the agitated Josephine. "Are you endeavoring to frighten us to death?"

"Are *you* frightened, Pauline?" asked the Emperor, turning towards the fairest and the frailest of his sisters, the Princess Borghese; "I am, as you hear, relating the history—or rather the ultimate fate—of a beautiful, a very beautiful woman."

"Why do you appeal to me, Napoléoné?" was the rejoinder. "Your vanity as a *conteur* is really insatiable. You have beheaded your heroine, so there is an end of the affair; for no one can take the slightest interest in a parcel of barbarians who could murder a beautiful woman in cold blood."

"Nevertheless, and with due deference to your opinion, I will finish my story," said the Emperor with one of his most sarcastic smiles. "The Duke of Wurtemberg married a second wife nine years after the death of his first, and during my campaign in Italy. The successor of Caroline of Brunswick-Wolfenbittel, was Charlotte Augusta Matilda, Princess-royal of England, and daughter of George II. He was at that period only Prince-royal, but succeeded his father on the 19th of December, 1797.

"Wurtemberg had hitherto made common cause with the Germanic Empire against France. The new sovereign was, however, no sooner in possession of the throne than he hastened to conclude a peace; and opened a correspondence for that purpose with me,

which was carried on until my departure for Egypt. I am not about to digress into politics, so do not look alarmed, Josephine—*Je reviens à mes moutons.*

“The first wife of the Duke of Wurtemberg had been both beautiful and intellectual, but she was, nevertheless, not perfect; and whispers soon became rife at court that she had looked with marked favor upon a certain handsome young page; who, presuming upon her protection, took the liberty of attempting to leave the country without the sanction of his sovereign. The motive of his thus seeking to absent himself at a time when his vanity and his ambition may be supposed to have been alike gratified, was never known; though it was afterwards surmised that his courage did not altogether equal his personal advantages; and that he was apprehensive of the results of an affair so delicate and dangerous as that in which he found himself involved. Be this as it might, thus much at least is certain, that he had already reached the frontier, and had nearly completed his supper, when a peach was placed before him on a plate of curious old china, beneath which he found a small scroll of paper, whereon were written the words: ‘Return, or tremble!’

“He returned.

“Scarcely, however, had he regained the capital, when he saw upon his dressing-table a magnificent vase of cut and colored glass; and while in the act of examining this new bauble, and wondering whence it could have come, a second scroll, similar to the first, dropped at his feet, which being unrolled, he found to contain a new warning. On this occasion it bore the injunction, ‘Depart, or tremble!’

“Vacillating between these two opposite commands, the young man resolved to explain the mysterious circumstance to his royal mistress: to explain to her the peril in which he stood, and to solicit her advice. Its nature may be surmised by the fact that the youth made no further attempt to leave the court.

“Rumor asserts that, about this time, a prince—we will not guess at his identity—paid a visit to the father of the audacious page, and laid before him sundry letters, papers, and love-tokens, tending to implicate the wife of the one, and the son of the other; and that when the miserable parent had read them from end to end, his visitor said sternly: ‘Pronounce the sentence of the culprit.’ The lips of the wretched father quivered spasmodically, but he could not articulate a syllable; and, meanwhile, the clear cold eye of the outraged husband remained fixed upon him.

“They were standing beside the wide hearth, upon which blazed a huge fire of pine-wood; and at length the modern Brutus grasped with trembling fingers one of the hand-irons which chanced to be within his reach, and traced in the ashes several letters. The word thus written commenced with a D, and was terminated by an h. The sentence was tacitly pronounced. The prince bent for a few seconds over the ill-formed characters—for the muscles of the writer had proved less firm than his purpose—and then, with a cold bend of the head, he strode from the room and left the house.

“A council was convened, at which were assembled all the principal personages of the state, and several of the relatives of the princess. The condemnatory documents were produced and read; and as they were

conclusive of the guilt of both parties, each individual present was invited to pronounce sentence upon the accused. The first who replied to the appeal declared for a divorce; but a near kinsman of the erring wife vehemently opposed what he affirmed to be an ill-judged and dangerous act of lenity. 'Her death alone,' he exclaimed; 'can save the honor of the prince. There is no other alternative.' His opinion was adopted; and the council had no sooner broken up than the same individual who had endeavored to save the life of the guilty woman, hastened to apprise her of the fate with which she was menaced, and to entreat that she would save herself by flight; offering at the same time to assist her evasion that very night, if she would solemnly pledge herself never again to see the rash young man by whose imprudence she had been compromised, and to remain during the remainder of her life a self-constituted prisoner in a castle in Scotland, where he could insure her a refuge.

"As she rejected both these conditions with haughty displeasure, the interview was abruptly terminated by her chivalrous visitor; who, although he had been willing to risk his own life in order to save that of his fair but frail mistress, could not contemplate without disgust her steady perseverance in vice, even under circumstances so threatening as those by which she was surrounded. 'Pardon me, madame;' he said coldly as he prepared to leave the room; 'I intruded myself in the hope of rendering service to a repentant woman; but I have no help to offer to one who glories in her sin.' Unhappily for herself, she did not recall him.

"The room occupied by the page was situated on

the higher story of the palace, at the termination of a long gallery, which was repeated on every floor to the foundation of the building. It was necessary that he should traverse this gallery in order to gain a back staircase by which he was accustomed to reach the private apartments of the princess; and his destruction was consequently easy. On each floor, and precisely on the same spot, four boards were removed, thus forming a wide opening, which terminated only above the chamber of his royal mistress. The upper gallery, into which his own room opened, was never lighted; an arrangement which had hitherto been subject of congratulation to both parties, as it rendered his movements less likely to excite observation; and one upon which they had frequently congratulated themselves. He had, therefore, been long accustomed to grope his way in the darkness; and—thus much premised—you may readily anticipate the sequel. The wretched page, unsuspecting of the fate which impended over him, and so familiar with his path that he needed no lamp to guide his footsteps, sprang across the threshold of his chamber without one misgiving as the last sounds of life died away in the corridors of the palace, and the deep silence of midnight settled over its dim halls and passages—three bounds, and his foot met no resistance—down, down, headlong, from floor to floor, fell the bold and ambitious boy who had dared to raise his eyes to the wife of his sovereign—down, down, until he met with one slight obstacle in his descent, so slight that it failed beneath his weight, and only served to render his suffering more acute. The planks which formed the ceiling of the princess's apartment had not been re-

moved, lest the circumstance might attract her notice and thus excite her suspicions, but they were so skilfully sawn through that they hung merely by a few fibres; and he had therefore no sooner struck upon them than they yielded beneath the sudden pressure; and the blooming page, with his blue eyes, his cloud of sunny hair, his ruby lips, and his graceful limbs, fell a shapeless and ensanguined mass at the feet of the royal lady who was awaiting him."

A cry of horror burst from all the auditors of the Emperor; and his self-gratulation at the effect which his narrative had produced was visible.

Not a voice was raised to urge him to proceed with his tale, but each of the party looked earnestly towards him. Napoleon perfectly understood the silent and agitated appeal. He slowly buried his finger and thumb in his snuff-box, inhaled "the fragrant weed" with epicurean deliberation; and then, resuming his habitual attitude, he pursued his narration.

"The scene must have been a frightful one when Mary Stuart vainly sought to screen Rizzio from the daggers of his assassins, and saw the skirts of her robe dabbled in his blood; but that was mere melodrama to the spectacle of Caroline of Brunswick-Wolfenbuttel gazing down upon the mummified mass of what had so lately been the peerless person of her lover. No doubt that her first impulse must have been to fling herself upon his body; to clasp him, crushed and disfigured as he was, to the heart which had enshrined him as its idol; but even passion is not omnipotent, for we are all more or less human and self-centred. Well is it for us that we are so perpetually satisfied with the surface of

things ; that we do not seek to look deeper ; let us retain our illusions while we can.

“In this case the illusion lasted no longer ; what Caroline had loved was the brilliant beauty, and the faultless proportions of the unhappy boy whom she had lured to his destruction—and what remained of these ? A shapeless and gory heap, at which her woman nature revolted, and before which her woman-courage shrank appalled. That thus it must have been is certain ; for the gorgeous apartment, whose echoes had long been awakened only by murmured words of tenderness and sighs of passion, now resounded with wild shrieks, and bursts of unearthly laughter ; while her women, attracted by the cries of their mistress, rushed to her assistance, ignorant of the catastrophe which awaited them.

“The princess was borne to her bed insensible. The screams of her attendants aroused the other inmates of the palace, and the greatest consternation prevailed. The accident appeared so inexplicable that even horror was partially swallowed up in astonishment ; although there were a few among the spectators who looked gloomily upon each other, like men disposed to seek a deeper and darker solution of the mystery than they cared to acknowledge. There was, however, one individual of more nerve and presence of mind than those about him, who undertook to explain the cause of the frightful tragedy by asserting that, beyond all doubt, the dry rot had destroyed the timbers of the palace ; and, in accordance with this opinion, all the galleries on that side of the building were closed, on the pretext that they were too dangerous for use until the flooring had been relaid.

“The public were satisfied with this explanation—let us not quarrel with their credulity.

“The princess was no sooner restored to consciousness than she thoroughly appreciated the peril of her position. She regretted, beyond all doubt, her refusal to accept the asylum in Scotland which had been offered to her. She was alone with her guilt and her terrors; friendless; and, as she was too well aware, not only suspected, but condemned. She felt that the fate of the page foreshadowed her own; and that she had no resource save in flight. But whither?—What mattered it? The world was wide; and turn on which side she might, she must be equally a wanderer and a stranger. The duchy of which she had been one of the brightest ornaments, was a mere speck on the map of Europe. She must escape! Once beyond the frontier and she would be safe. But to whom could she apply for help? Whom dare she trust? Doubts like these are one of the most bitter curses of greatness. The very ‘divinity which doth hedge a king,’ as the English poet expresses it, flings back the warmer and kindlier feelings of our fellow-men. Crowned heads and sovereign princes may boast of devoted followers and faithful servants, but it is rare, indeed, that they can secure a friend.

“Precisely in this position was Caroline of Brunswick-Wolfenbuttel at this critical moment of her life. To whom could she apply for help? In whom dare she confide? These were questions which she asked herself until her heart heaved almost to bursting, and her brain reeled; but the minutes were growing into hours, and something must be done. After mature reflection she at length resolved to confide in her first

waiting-woman, to whom she had been an indulgent and munificent mistress; Gemonde was bound to her by a thousand obligations; alike in sorrow and in joy she had shown her a ready sympathy; she had never wounded her feelings by a harsh word or a disdainful gesture; and the more she dwelt on the idea, the more she assured herself that on this woman depended her safety. From her she could not apprehend lukewarmness, and scorned to dream of treachery.

“Amplly, as it appeared, was her trust rewarded; the favorite attendant, throwing herself at the feet of her august mistress, thanked her with tears and sobs for so marked and honorable a proof of her confidence; and one which, as she declared, was rendered doubly valuable from the circumstance of her having a brother whose best ambition it would be to serve so illustrious a lady; and who, being attached to the police of the city, and in constant correspondence with its numerous agents, could easily secure her escape.

“The princess had no sooner received this assurance, than she decided on leaving the palace at an hour past midnight, by a subterraneous passage with which her attendant was familiar; and which, traversing alike the ancient vaults and the modern cellars, terminated beneath the foundations of a house outside the city walls, where a carriage was to be in readiness to facilitate her flight. Confident of the practicability of this scheme; and, in consequence, no longer apprehensive of personal violence, Caroline of Brunswick-Wolfenbittel, having secured in a small casket her gold and diamonds (the proceeds of which would enable her to live in comfort, if not actually in affluence, in another

land), sat down with the chosen companion of her projected evasion to weep over the frightful death of the ill-fated youth whom she had by her own frailty consigned to an early and dishonored grave; and she was still thus occupied when her husband sent to inquire if she could receive him in her apartments.

“Had she consented to do so, who can say what might have been the result of the interview? The page was dead; the princess was young, fascinating, and beautiful; and even princes are mortal. The concession might at least have saved her life; and it is probable that it would have done so; for wherefore, save to afford her a last chance of pleading her own cause, could the injured husband be supposed to volunteer so bitter a meeting? It did not take place, however; for, consulting only her passion, and the pride which she had allowed to slumber when it might have shielded her from disgrace, she refused the interview; and, drawing her desk towards her, she addressed to him perhaps the most ill-judged and dangerous note which a woman, circumstanced as she was at that moment, ever ventured to write to the husband whom she had dishonored. That note was communicated to me, and I was so much impressed by its contents that I can repeat them to you. Thus it ran:—

“‘You have shed the blood of an unfortunate young man, when I alone was guilty; and you will have to answer for his death before God, as you will also have to answer for mine. Had you any sense of justice I might accept you as my judge, but I know too well that you only desire to become my executioner. We had better not meet, as I have only my curse to bequeath to you.’

“Convinced that her safety was secured, the princess despatched this letter as recklessly as she had written it; and I think you will all concede that it was not calculated to appease the irritated feelings of an offended husband;” continued the Emperor after a pause; “and thus the day wore on. Twilight deepened, and the miserable Caroline, her heart bursting with grief, and her nerves shaken by anxiety, received the ladies of her household as she was accustomed to do before retiring for the night; but they had no sooner withdrawn than, trembling with impatience, she wrapped herself closely in one of the wide and coarse cloaks worn by the female peasants of Germany during the winter months, (in which disguise she trusted that she should be secure in the event of her encountering any of the servants of the palace) and drew the heavy hood over her face.

“On emerging from the ducal apartments, accompanied by her zealous attendant, she descended a back staircase; and then proceeded along a stone passage, which running parallel with the offices, received its only light from the apertures perforated in its walls at certain and infrequent intervals, that enabled her to distinguish the voices of the cooks and scullions who were, even at that hour, preparing for the repast of the following day. So clearly, indeed, did they meet her ear, that she might even have overheard their conversation had she not been absorbed by the engrossing nature of her own situation.

“This first passage traversed, several others presented themselves, which it was necessary either to cross or to pursue; but the careful waiting-woman had possessed herself by some stratagem of a handful of keys, of

which she made rapid and effective use ; until, in fitting one of them into the lock of an inner door that opposed their progress, the whole of those which she still carried escaped her grasp, and were scattered upon the ground. Great was the terror of the fugitives, as, with beating pulses, and straining eyes, they listened for several seconds to assure themselves that the noise of the fall had not excited any attention in the offices, when convinced that it had not been heard, they passed their hands over the sanded floor in every direction in search of their lost treasures—treasures indeed to them at that moment—and having at length succeeded in recovering them, they once more hurried on. Ere long, they had left the more modern portion of the subterraneans behind them ; and found themselves in a large and lofty stone hall, which, as Gemonde informed her royal mistress, terminated the original vaults of the palace. Vainly, however, did they successively apply every key they possessed to the lock of the low-arched door which opened at the further extremity of this vast and gloomy dungeon ; not one would open it ; and they ultimately became satisfied that it must still be lying near the spot where the others had fallen.

“The princess, who was by this time overcome with apprehension and fatigue, declared herself utterly unable to retrace her steps ; and her devoted attendant was consequently compelled to entreat that Her Highness would sit down and rest, while she returned alone to renew her search. The alternative was a terrible one to the delicate and carefully-nurtured victim of her own vices ; but there was no escape. She must submit, or prepare to die of famine where she stood : unseen,

unpitted, and unshrived. 'Go;' she gasped out at last; 'Go; but do not leave me long, Gemonde, or I shall become mad.' All was dark, and so profoundly still about her, that she could hear the beating of her own heart as she bent forward to listen for the return of her guide. A weary interval succeeded; the princess could not even guess at its duration; but to her it appeared as though hours had elapsed since she was left alone in that dim and dreary solitude, without an arm to sustain, or a voice to comfort her.

"For awhile the pang at her heart occupied her thoughts; and she lived over again the last hours of horror which she had passed in her princely home—visibly, plainly, she once more saw before her the dabbled corpse of her heart's idol; and she shuddered as the mangled mass appeared again to fall at her feet, and to share her lonely vigil. Fortunately for her reason, the spectral illusion vanished after a time; and then came visions of the future, when exiled alike from her adopted country and the dignities which were her birthright, she must be content to live in seclusion, un-honored and unknown.

"Gradually, however, the past and the future alike failed to withdraw her attention from the terrors of the present. She could no longer deceive herself; hours must indeed have elapsed since she was abandoned in that living tomb. Her failing limbs were becoming unequal to support her drooping form; strange noises were in her ears; the damps of the vault were clinging to her hair, and chilling her blood. Had her attendant been discovered? Would she, to save herself from an almost certain death, leave her to her horrible,

her hopeless fate? Or worse, far worse than all, had she betrayed her?

“Maddened by the thought, the wretched woman became unconscious alike of fatigue and fear; her only desire was to escape from the terrors by which she was surrounded. She felt as though the roof of the vault, spacious and lofty as it was, became every moment more heavy and more near, and that the walls were closing in upon her on every side. Human nature could passively endure no more. She started, shrieked, and fled. On! on! she must find the narrow passage by which she had entered the subterranean where she had so long watched and waited; the doors had been left unclosed behind her, for her flight had been too eager and too hurried for what her attendant had declared to be an unnecessary precaution at so late an hour, as that of her evasion. On! on! that passage must be found—But how? There was only one hope of success; and her small ungloved hand was passed along the rough and humid surface of the masonry as she followed up the boundary-wall of the vault; while from time to time she stumbled against a loose stone, and was compelled to pause, writhing with pain, ere she could pursue her dark and dangerous way.

“Suddenly she heard the trampling of feet above her; and a gleam of light penetrating through a ventilator caused her to stand motionless. She had indeed found her way back to the inhabited portion of the palace; she could again distinguish, not only voices, but even words. Thankful to know herself once more within human reach, she instinctively listened—aye, princess as she was—after enduring whole hours of

a living death where neither sight nor sound of her fellow-beings had been able to reach her, she listened—”

“But who could know all this, Bonaparte?” asked the Empress, pale with emotion. “To whom did she tell all this?”

“My good Josephine,” replied Napoleon, with a slight frown at the interruption—“endeavor to place yourself in her position; imagine what your own feelings would have been; how you would have struggled to escape the fate which awaited you; and be satisfied that all passed precisely as I have narrated it.”

“Perhaps so; but still—”

“Buonaparté will never be able to finish his story if you do not allow him to tell it in his own way,” said *Madame Mère*. “He hates to be questioned.”

The Princess Pauline curled her beautiful lip as she asked languidly; “Well, Napoléoné, what followed?”

“It followed; as a natural consequence;” pursued the Emperor, only half appeased; “that she overheard a conversation, which at once riveted her attention, and overwhelmed her with terror. ‘Only to think how soon all may be over;’ said a man’s voice which, rude as it was, still betrayed deep regret, and sank to her heart as she leant her throbbing temples against the stone-work of the vault; ‘Poor Princess! She was in her usual health, to all appearance, at dinner-time this very day; and now they say that she is dying.’”

“‘We must all die, princes as well as paupers;’ was the rejoinder of one of his companions; ‘not one of us can buy off his last creditor.’ ‘True enough;’ remarked a third; ‘but, nevertheless, this illness is wonderfully

sudden. To think that she should have dined at table to-day, and that she should die to-night, is something more than one can understand.’”

“Horrible!” murmured Josephine, covering her eyes with her hand to conceal the tears which she could not suppress.

“It is needless to say,” continued the Emperor, “with what frightful earnestness the princess hung upon their words. Still it might not be of her that they spoke—she was not the only princess in the palace—there was yet hope! That hope did not long endure, however: she heard rapid footsteps hurrying along the passages, and then a voice which she recognized as that of one of her ushers, exclaiming breathlessly: ‘I bring you sorrowful news—in a few days we shall be in mourning for the Hereditary Princess.’ ‘Who told you that all was so nearly over?’ eagerly inquired his listeners. ‘Gemonde, Her Highness’s favorite woman, who has scarcely left the bedside of her ill-fated mistress. I met her not ten minutes ago, half mad with grief. You all know how she loved the princess; and the sight of her sufferings had been more than she could bear. They are, she says, so violent and so acute, that nothing short of a miracle can enable her to endure them for another hour. Every one is up in the palace, and the citizens are already astir in the town. The duke has locked himself into his apartment, and refuses to be seen by any one. I only trust that he may not sink under the blow.’

“And she still stood there and listened—she whose last chance of life had been the good faith of the treacherous follower by whom she was thus betrayed—

listened until the voices hissed in her ears, and strange lights danced before her dilated eyes. Once she strove to shriek out an appeal for help, but her parched tongue refused its office, and she only emitted a gurgling sob, which died away in her throat. Paralysed by terror, she was unconscious of a muffled sound which gradually approached. There were heavy, but cautious footfalls in the deep sand which formed the flooring of the vault, but she heard them not. Her whole being was absorbed in the conversation which was still going on beside her, although she was no longer able to comprehend its nature; suddenly she felt herself seized by two robust arms, and dragged violently away from the iron-barred window that connected the vault with the kitchens. Vainly did she struggle in the grasp of her captors; her cry for assistance awoke no response as it died away in the depths of the subterraneans along which she was hurried, in dull and mocking echoes. Without respect either for her sex or for her rank, she was flung rudely to the ground, and her hands and feet secured with cords. Wildly she prayed for mercy; and called upon her family, and even upon her husband to save her; she was far removed from human aid. Vainly she sought to bribe her tormentors.

“‘Take all—all—’ she moaned in her agony: ‘here are gold and jewels—spare my life—I am so young to die!’

“The brutal beings who were now the masters of her fate vouchsafed no reply, save by so tightening her bonds that she could not move a limb, and finally forcing a gag into her mouth. This outrage accomplished,

the lower part of her body was thrust into a sack of black velvet, which was fastened round her waist and secured under her feet; and from that moment her Maker alone could hear her supplications for assistance."

"What!" exclaimed the Empress in an accent of mingled horror and dismay; "was that really the fate of the first wife of the Elector of Wurtemberg? Was it she whom the headsman of Strasbourg was compelled to murder?"

"Madame;" replied Napoleon; "I am not aware that the name of the Elector of Wurtemberg has once escaped my lips throughout the tale to which you have just listened. It is true that rumor *did* connect it with the death of the princess; but the great are always calumniated by the envious. I therefore offer no opinion as to the guilt or innocence of Frederic William; nor shall I even permit myself to express my sense of the extent to which such an act of retribution would have been justifiable or unjustifiable on his part. I have merely been relating to you a story which was not, as I conceived, without a certain amount of interest. I have given it to you as it was told to me; and I need not point out its moral. But I have unwittingly permitted my tale to intrude too far into the night, and I should regret to cause you unpleasant dreams."

So saying, the Emperor returned his snuff-box to his pocket; kissed the forehead of his mother, according to his invariable custom; and before his auditors had recovered from the painful impression produced by the dark page of history which he had spread before them, he had left the room.

CHAPTER III.

A BOURBON SOVEREIGN UNDER THE CONSULATE.

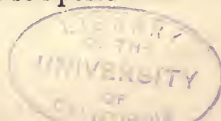
IN May, 1801, the Prince of Tuscany, Don Louis I., whom the First Consul had just created King of Etruria, arrived in Paris with his wife, his son, and a few persons who had been appointed to different situations in his household. Nothing could exceed the astonishment of the Parisians on ascertaining that Bonaparte should have voluntarily bestowed a crown upon a Bourbon; and many were inclined to murmur, believing that so inexplicable a proceeding was the mere prelude to his intention of ultimately replacing the rule of France in the hands of her legitimate monarchs, after having so long labored to alienate from them the affections of the French people. His partisans were, however, in error; no such wild idea had, even for an instant, traversed the brain of the extraordinary man who had already planted his foot upon the first step of their hereditary throne, and subsequently annihilated all the hopes of the Republicans; nor had a week gone by before all those who had been absurd enough to indulge in such a fancy, were thoroughly convinced of their error.

The First Consul had attained the culminating point of his power, if not yet that of his ambition; and, although not himself a king, he was a king-maker. His far-sighted policy was consequently not at fault, as

his adherents had for a moment believed; and Louis, Prince of Tuscany, under the modest title of Count of Leghorn, on his way to take possession of his new kingdom, was invited to make a short sojourn in the metropolis of his ancestors, as the guest of him by whom their dynasty had been (as it then appeared) definitively overthrown.

A residence had been secured for him in the Hôtel Montesson, which had latterly been occupied by the Spanish Ambassador, where every preparation had been made to do honor to the royal visitors; for it was no part of the tactics of the First Consul to excite the sympathies of the disaffected by exhibiting to them a Bourbon subjected to neglect or indignity, but rather to leave them free to judge between himself and the scion of a family to which many of them still adhered from habit and tradition.

A greater contrast could not effectively have been afforded than that which existed between the energetic, restless, eager spirit of Bonaparte, and the indolent, supine, and pleasure-loving Louis; who, after having seen the Archduchy of his father wrested from him by the victorious arms of France, found it suddenly elevated into a kingdom by the fiat of the First Consul, and himself created its sovereign under the title of King of Etruria. Shy, timid, and without either moral energy or mental resources; devoted to sensual indulgences, and inordinately fond of money, he had no trace of royalty about him, save his fine and distinguished appearance; while even the effect of his striking person was marred by the awkwardness induced by his utter want of confidence and self-possession.



His wife, Maria Louisa of Spain, the third daughter of Carlos IV., was short, swarthy, and extremely plain, while her manners were coarse and abrupt; but she was kind-hearted, unaffected, and an admirable wife and mother. In intellect she was far superior to the king, yet so wanting in tact, that her endeavor to conceal his deficiencies only served to render them the more conspicuous. Her personal habits were peculiar, and in many respects unpleasant to those about her. She always made her toilette for the day when she rose in the morning, and might be seen as early as seven o'clock walking in the garden of the hôtel, wearing a dress brocaded with gold, a diadem of brilliants on her head, and her child in her arms, her long train sweeping the gravelled paths unheeded. As she would not suffer a nurse to tend the infant prince, it occasionally occurred that before the close of the day the costume of Her Majesty had ceased to be attractive from its freshness; but, whenever any one who was admitted to her presence ventured to comment on the fact, she contented herself by observing, that sunshine was the best remedy for such accidents; and never could be prevailed upon to change any portion of her dress.

Despite their modest incognito, the newly-fledged sovereigns were received and treated at the Tuileries with all the honors due to crowned heads; but neither ball nor banquet could put Louis at his ease with his formidable host, before whom he displayed, to his wife's undisguised annoyance, a greater amount of inanity than under any other circumstances. In his absence he affected to speak of Bonaparte with even exaggerated enthusiasm: but he had not sufficient

self-control to conceal the lingering bitterness induced by the consciousness that it was to him that he was indebted for his crown.

It was, as already stated, at the Hôtel Montesson that the royal couple were permanently established during their sojourn in Paris. This very handsome edifice had been built by the Marquise de Montesson before the Revolution, and was connected with the residence of the Duke of Orleans by a conservatory, which, on her removal to the latter, she had caused to be closed. At the request of the king, it was, however, again rendered available as a means of ingress and egress between the two houses, and not a day passed in which the families did not spend many hours in each other's society.

Madame de Montesson was one of the most remarkable and the most high-bred women of her time, and assembled in her salons all the distinguished individuals in the capital—returned emigrants—royalist nobles who had remained in France, and had, like herself, escaped the revolutionary axe—men in power, who had risen on the ruins of the past—scientific, literary, and artistic celebrities; and women conspicuous for their wit or their personal attractions.

Charlotte Jeanne Rénaud de la Haye de Rion was the descendant of an ancient and illustrious family in Brittany, and was born in Paris in 1737. In 1753, when in the full blaze of her extraordinary beauty, she became the wife of the Marquis de Montesson, a nobleman of great wealth, who was lieutenant-general of the royal army. Early left a widow, she gained the affections of the Duke of Orleans, who obtained the

verbal permission of Louis XV. to marry her, on condition that the marriage should not be publicly recognised unless she became the mother of a son. As this event did not take place, she continued to bear the name of her first husband ; but her amiability, her intellectual acquirements, and her perfectly unsullied reputation, rendered her an object of universal respect.

She had no sooner ascertained that Louis XVI. was a prisoner in the Tuileries, than she solicited the honor of being admitted to his presence ; and the unfortunate monarch, deeply affected by a request which was almost an equivalent to signing her own death-warrant, caused her to be informed that he should receive her with pleasure as *his cousin*. She was accordingly announced in the royal apartment as the Dowager-Duchess of Orleans, and was invited to play at backgammon with the king. For this bold and self-immolating courtesy to fallen greatness she was imprisoned on a charge of treason to the Republic, and remained a captive until released by the death of Robespierre.

This circumstance rendered Madame de Montesson peculiarly sacred in the eyes of the royalist nobility, who rallied round her with a respect and reverence, which the very fact of her simplicity and absence of pretension only tended to increase.

Bonaparte was no sooner elevated to the Consulate, than he requested the presence of the Marquise at the Tuileries ; and as she was announced he advanced to the door of the salon, welcomed her in the most flattering manner, and entreated her to inform him if he could in any way be of service to her.

“General ;” she replied with quiet dignity ; “I have no right to claim any favor at your hands.”

“Pardon me, Madame ;” was the rejoinder of her host ; “you have doubtless forgotten, although I have not done so, that I received my first crown from your hands. You came to Brienne with M. le Duc d’Orleans to distribute the prizes ; and in placing upon my head the laurel-wreath which was destined to precede a few others, you said graciously ; ‘May it be an earnest of happiness !’ They tell me that I am a fatalist, Madame, and perhaps I am so ; at all events, your prayer was heard, and I have never ceased to remember that it was uttered. Suffer me to be useful to you if I can. Moreover, the refinement of high society is nearly lost among us, and I look to you to restore it. We require to fall back upon the past in order that France may regain her traditional supremacy in all that once made her court a model for Europe. Be kind enough to afford to Madame Bonaparte some hints for her guidance ; and when any foreigners of rank arrive in Paris, to entertain them, in order that they may perceive that we can still boast of the grace, wit, and amiability for which we have, during many centuries, been celebrated : while you must also permit me to restore to you the annual pension of a hundred and sixty thousand francs, which you received before the Revolution, as the widow of the Duke of Orleans.”

Such was the origin of the favor which Madame de Montesson enjoyed throughout the remainder of her life ; and by which she profited to serve her friends, but never to revenge herself upon her enemies. As she had been fortunate enough to retain some portion of

her fortune, the renewal of her pension enabled her to fulfil the wishes of Bonaparte in every respect; for, with an income of upwards of two hundred thousand livres a-year, (a considerable amount at a period when money was so scarce) she found herself in a position to resume all the habits of her palmy and quasi-royal days. She received company every evening, but never paid visits. Constantly seated upon a sofa, with an ottoman under her feet, which was concealed by a satin counterpane; an arrangement which precluded the necessity of her rising to receive her guests—an honor which she accorded only to Madame Bonaparte—or to conduct them to the door of the salon on their departure. When, however, she desired her visitors to understand that his or her future appearance in her circle was declined; and she was seen to leave her seat as they retired, it was patent to all present that thenceforward her door would be closed against the individuals of whom she had so ceremoniously taken leave.

Such was the neighbor of their Majesties of Etruria; and even the supine and sickly Louis was not proof against her fascinating manners, her simple but unpretending demeanor, and her amiability of disposition. Her wit, totally devoid of satire, did not alarm his self-love; while himself a Bourbon, he took great delight in listening to all the family details which the accomplished widow of the Duke of Orleans had hoarded in her heart of hearts; and which she seldom found an opportunity of pouring into the ear of so sympathising a listener.

The King of Etruria was naturally very indolent, believing the *dolce far niente* to be the best privilege

of princes, a weakness which greatly annoyed the First Consul, who loathed every species of inertness in those about him; and who, on one occasion, animadverted very severely on the supineness of the new Sovereign to his colleague Cambacérés.

“The worthy man;” he remarked with a contemptuous curl of the lip—and the scorn of Bonaparte was withering—“does not exhibit much anxiety about his dear and loyal subjects. He passes his time in gossiping with old women, to whom he affects to speak highly of me, while, in point of fact, he is mortified that he should owe a throne to the detested French Republic. He takes no interest in anything that I can discover, save riding, shooting, dancing, and going behind the scenes of a theatre. In short, he is a poor creature altogether.”

“Thus much is certain;” replied Cambacérés, “that while he might have made a very respectable Duke of Parma, he will be a very sorry King of Etruria; and it is asserted that it was with the intention of disgusting the French people with royalty that you seated this paltry puppet on a throne—much upon the same principle that the Spartans disgusted their children with excess, by exhibiting to them a drunken slave.”

“Not so, not so, my dear colleague;” interposed Bonaparte; “I have no wish to disgust them with royalty; but the visit of His Majesty the King of Etruria—a grand name, eh! *mon cher*, to be borne by so slender an individual? The visit of Don Louis will not fail to give a heart-burn to a great many of the good folks who are endeavoring to revive a taste for the Bourbons.”

“But he must, meanwhile, weary yourself and Madame Bonaparte, wretchedly.”

“Men in power do not expect to live on rose-leaves;” replied the First Consul, shrugging his shoulders; “and I confess that it amuses me to show him to the Parisians. We go to-night, as you know, to the *Théâtre Français*, where he will, no doubt, fall asleep *au beau milieu* of the sublime tragedy of *Œdipe*, to the immense delectation of the sight-loving public. You will be there of course.”

Cambacérès answered in the affirmative; and in the evening the king and the modern king-maker proceeded in the same carriage to witness the tragedy of *Corneille* which had been selected for the occasion, not because it was one of his master-pieces, but because it contained several passages which the astute director of the theatre was aware might be applied with great aptness to the First Consul. Nor was he mistaken in his calculations, for on the utterance of the line: “*J’ai fait des souverains, et n’ai pas voulu l’être,*” the applause throughout the house was deafening. Bonaparte smiled and bowed; and so did Louis of Etruria, affording to the audience a scene of as broad farce as ever was interpolated into one of the marvellous dramas of Shakspeare.

A few days subsequently the First Consul sent to the Hôtel Montesson, as presents to his royal *protégé*, some magnificent carpets from the looms of Aubusson and la Savonnerie, accompanied by a vase of Sevres porcelain valued at three hundred thousand francs. As it was essential that the vase should be carefully mounted upon its pedestal, twelve men were instructed

to place it in the principal saloon ; and their task was no sooner completed than a chamberlain inquired of His Majesty what he should bestow on them for their trouble.

“Bestow on them!” exclaimed Louis of Etruria ; “Nothing ; the vase is a present from the First Consul.”

“True, Sire ;” replied the palace official ; “but in such cases it is customary to reward the messengers to whom the present is entrusted.”

“Then I purchase the thing instead of accepting it ;” said the young sovereign ; “but if such is the custom in France I suppose I must conform to it. Moreover it is a duty to encourage art ; and I should be sorry to give the Parisians reason to doubt my liberality. Let them have a crown each.”

As a matter of course the offering was refused ; and His Majesty became the owner of the vase without disbursing his three louis.

A series of splendid entertainments were offered to the royal couple before their departure for their new kingdom by Madame de Montesson, M. de Talleyrand, and other high personages, at which they evidently enjoyed themselves as thoroughly as though they had been mere simple individuals ; but they were somewhat less interested by the visits which they made to the public establishments of the capital. They yawned at the *Academie de Musique* ; could not conceal their weariness at the *Institut* ; and were only diverted for an instant at the *Hôtel de la Monnaie*, while a medal was struck to commemorate their visit to Paris.

“*Bon !*” exclaimed Bonaparte, as they finally drove

off on their way to that Italy where they were so coldly and distrustfully welcomed; "I do not think that my good Parisians will ask me for some time to come to indulge them with another Bourbon."

CHAPTER IV.

A STRAY DOCUMENT.

A SHORT time after Joseph Bonaparte became King of Naples—said Count — a very singular circumstance occurred to a friend of mine, a young man of high family, who had recently been appointed Auditor of State; while I considered the whole thing so interesting, that I requested him to give me all the details in writing; and this he ultimately consented to do, although not until after the overthrow of Napoleon. My friend is now dead; and in order to avoid all mistake or misconception, I shall send you a copy of the MS. itself.

"Prince Cambacérès, Arch-Chancellor of the Empire — thus it ran — was a friend of my family, and honored me with his protection, which was so valuable and so unfailling that I shall never forget the extent of the obligation which I owe him. It was to this clever statesman that I was indebted for my appointment, and he doubled its value in my eyes by attaching me to the police-ministry in order that I might reside in Paris.

“Every week I was entrusted with one or more files of papers by the minister of that department, which it was my duty to analyse, and to report upon ; nor do I hesitate to confess that I took a pleasure in weakening as much as I dared to do so, the acrimony of the accusers, and the malignant malice of certain reports sent in by the principal provincial magistrates. I pitilessly suppressed everything which I saw had been dictated by personal hatred, and revengeful feeling ; and it is almost incredible how many facts which needed only to have been simply stated, in order to enlighten the minister on what he desired to know, were elaborated and distorted by the envious and hostile selfishness of those by whom they were furnished.

“Rest assured that the files of the police-ministry are curious and useful studies, although it must be admitted that they do not tend to increase the philanthropy of the student. Thus, as I have already stated, at some risk to myself, without venturing totally to suppress information which was essential to the government, I softened the harshness of certain expressions, paralyzed the allegations of culpability, struck out malevolent insinuations which were not supported by proofs ; and in doing this I had the sanction of my conscience that I was acting loyally towards the Emperor.

“One day I received a much larger accumulation of papers than usual ; and for a considerable time, as I was sorting them in order to class each under its appropriate heading, I did not remark anything particularly interesting among them ; they contained, as was generally the case, a great deal of unmeaning gossip, an immense waste of words, no inconsiderable amount of self-lauda-

tion very flimsily disguised, and accusations based upon mere conjecture.

“ In turning over these pages, foul with falsehood and treachery, however, my eye suddenly fastened upon a letter much better written than the rest, wherein the name of Ferdinand VII. occurred more than once. This circumstance awakened my curiosity, and the attention with which I read it throughout made me acquainted with a tissue of horrors.

“ It was a plot proposed by a minister of religion, and written by his own hand, in which he placed that hand, armed with a dagger, at the disposal of Fouché for a stipulated sum ; and the victim was to have been Ferdinand VII., who was then a prisoner at Valençay.

“ In the whole course of my career I had never read a better digested document, or met with a plan more skilfully combined ; the assassin had foreseen everything ; and his batteries were so well directed that in the event of failure, or even had he been actually taken in the fact, he would have been the bearer of papers which must have thrown all the odium of the murder upon the Prince of Peace.

“ As I slowly proceeded in the perusal of this infernal machination, I was overcome by indignation, not unmixed with alarm ; and I began seriously to reflect upon the delicacy of my position. Several questions arose simultaneously in my mind. I asked myself if a document of this nature did not appertain exclusively to the reserved portfolio of the minister himself ; and how so important a letter could have found its way into the mass of insignificant papers among which it had fallen into my hands. Could it

have been by mistake ; or was it only to test my trustworthiness ? In the first case it would assuredly be reclaimed ; while in the second I should be expected to restore it ; and in either event I should be the victim of the most odious investigations ; so that after mature deliberation, convinced that my whole future career, and even my personal liberty would be compromised by the mere fact of its having been avowedly in my possession, I determined to suppress it. I acknowledge that my hand trembled as I withdrew the murderous document from the file ; but the more I reflected, the more satisfied I felt that, in order to preserve myself, I had no other alternative. If it has been delivered to me by mistake, I mentally argued, no proof can be adduced that it ever reached me ; while if, on the contrary, it was sent merely to try me, they will give me credit for my perspicacity in having avoided the snare ; and if the intention really was to effect my ruin, when once the odious document is destroyed there will be nothing upon which to base an accusation.

“ These reflections strengthened my resolution ; while at the same time I determined to profit by the discovery which I had made of the fatal secret, and to warn the prince that his life was in danger. On the other hand, I felt that the letter must be at once destroyed, while I ought, nevertheless, carefully to preserve its contents ; for which purpose, I adopted the two following expedients.

“ Being gifted with so tenacious a memory that I have on several occasions been enabled to retain the most minute details of a discussion in the Council of State, I twice read over the wretch’s letter to Fouché, and I

then copied it from recollection without the error of a single word; but as I could not retain the transcript with any more safety than I might have done the original document itself, I set to work to invent a cypher of my own. Having accomplished this, I took from the lower shelf of my library the five thick volumes of the encyclopedia, and on each page I made a dot over the letters corresponding with those of the document, being careful not to mark more than one or two on each page; and I have ever since carefully preserved the work without ever having felt the least misgiving that my secret would be discovered.

“When I had taken these precautions I folded both the letter and the copy in a cambric handkerchief, and burnt the whole together; after which I collected the ashes, and poured over them about a quart of boiling water, which they scarcely colored, and then threw the contents of the basin out of the window.

“Having done this, I thoroughly recovered my composure, for I will not attempt to deny that I had been nervously anxious throughout the whole operation. I trembled and shuddered at the slightest noise; the accidental ringing of the bell in my ante-room positively electrified me, and I apprehended nothing less than that the agents of Fouché had come to apprehend me. These are terrors, waking nightmares, which it is impossible to describe, and at which their victim is the first to laugh when the danger is gone by.

“I nevertheless awaited with considerable anxiety the arrival of the day on which I was to give in my reports, and to restore the papers; while I did not dare to anticipate it, as by so doing I might only be hasten-

ing the period of my own trial ; and when the eventful hour came at last, I affected an ease and indifference which I decidedly was very far from feeling. Nothing, however, occurred to disturb my equanimity ; the Official authorised to receive the produce of my labor, greeted me as cordially as usual ; and having delivered up my trust, I returned home without let or hindrance.

“This affair has always remained an enigma to me. How could the letter of the assassin have been mislaid when such jealous care was taken in the classification of papers during the Empire ? The circumstance was perfectly incomprehensible. Was it by mere chance that it had found its way into the very portfolio which was destined for me ? I am still unable to answer. All I know is that had such a plot been placed before the eyes of the Emperor, he would have rejected it with indignation ; and what I moreover know is that, to my great satisfaction, I never once heard the subject mentioned.

“My next undertaking was to attempt to warn the intended victim of the danger by which he was menaced ; and I must now tell you how I endeavored to combine what I regarded as the duty of an honest man and a Christian, with the prudence which my position imperatively required.

“During the course of a man’s life there are occasionally ideas by which he becomes morbidly absorbed ; and periods when he morally elevates himself into a hero, and resolves to overcome difficulties by the mere strength of his own will. My one idea for the time being was to save Ferdinand VII. ; and while speculating on the most probable means of intercourse with

him, even through the medium of a third person, and without the slightest probability of his ever being made aware whose hand it was which was outstretched to ward off the blow of the assassin, I felt the greatest exultation as I remembered that the latter was not my countryman. Of this the signature of the letter had at once convinced me, as the bravo had subscribed himself Pedro Munios. Its date was July the 11th, 1808.

“I was compelled to feel my way carefully through the dangerous labyrinth before me. It would have been worse than rash—it would have been utter madness—to have hazarded any direct communication with the captive monarch; and I consequently determined to reach him in some round-about manner, as I felt I should assuredly fail were I to be inconsiderate enough to draw upon myself the suspicions of the police who surrounded Valençay.

“While I was a prey to these perplexities, a light suddenly broke upon me, and I felt satisfied that I had found a guide.

“I remembered that the department of the Belles-Lettres of the Institute, numbered among its members one of those uncommon men, in whom it was possible to place the most implicit confidence; a man who would have done honor to Rome in her most palmy days; and whose intellect would have acquired for him the right of citizenship at Athens in the time of Pericles and Alcibiades. This remarkable individual was Cailhava,* who carried his modesty to a pitch which

* Jean François Cailhava, a dramatic author, born in the village of L'Extentrus, near Toulouse, in 1731, wrote a great number of comedies for the *Français* and the *Théâtre Italien*, nearly the whole of which were

was almost absurd ; never appearing conscious of his repeated and legitimate successes as a dramatic writer, and decidedly less aware than his readers that his *Art de la Comedie* was a monument of good taste and ingenious criticism.

“Cailhava was the very man for my purpose. I knew that he was perfectly familiar with the Spanish language, and that he was in ill odor with Napoleon ; and I therefore at once comprehended that he must have many acquaintances among the Spaniards then resident in Paris, and it was more than probable even with some members of the insurrectionary faction, and the faithful adherents of Ferdinand VII.

“Another difficulty then presented itself. How should I get at Cailhava, with whom I was very slightly acquainted, and who, in all probability, did not know me at all ? We had occasionally met, it is true, in the saloons of the Countess Potaska and the Count d’Escherny, but we had never been made known to each other. Circumstances did not permit me to be hyperfastidious, however ; and I determined to request of the latter that he would procure for me a private interview with the Academician.

“The Count d’Escherny was by birth a Swiss, and by principle a great partisan of Rousseau. Infinitely too well-bred to inquire the reason of what he must have considered as an extraordinary whim on my part, he simply and courteously acceded to my wish without

imitated from the Italian. The most popular among them was “The Tutor Duped, or the House with two Doors.” Besides other works he left at his death, which occurred in Paris, in 1813, his “*Art de la Comedie*” and his personal memoirs in MS.

the slightest remark, promising to inform M. Cailhava of my desire to make his acquaintance. A few days subsequently I received a note from the Count appointing three o'clock for my visit, and telling me that I should find *the person* I wished to meet in his drawing-room.

“Overjoyed at my prompt success I hastened to the interview, and was followed in a few minutes by M. Cailhava; to whom, confident as I felt in his honor, I frankly related the cause which had induced me to intrude upon his kindness.

“For an instant he made no reply, but appeared to be lost in thought; and during this short pause my anxiety was intense. Fortunately, however, it was not of long duration.

“‘Sir,’ he said gravely; ‘I thank you for the good opinion which you have of me; I am proud of being considered worthy of such trust. Yes, I *can* convey to the king the information by which he may save his life; but it must only be on one condition.’

“‘Name it,’ I exclaimed eagerly.

“‘This it is then,’ was his reply; ‘that you will not ask me, nor attempt in any other way to ascertain, the name of the individual whom I shall entrust with your message. I will not consent to expose either him or myself to danger. Towards my friend it would be foul treachery; while, in my own case, I have a child who would be cast helpless on the world, were I to incur the anger of the Emperor.’

“I readily gave the pledge that he required; and I then placed in his hands a copy of the letter which I had made that morning in a disguised hand, and with

both paper and ink which I had procured for the express purpose. It was arranged between us that we should not appear to recognise each other whenever we might chance to meet; and we finally separated, after he had promised to communicate to me the result of our attempt.

“Months wore on after my interview with Cailhava, without my having received any intelligence on the subject, and I had long ceased altogether to speculate upon the affair, when one morning my servant entered my room at an unusually early hour, and informed me that a young man, who was a stranger to him, desired to see me on business. I directed that he should be admitted; and at the first glance I detected that he was a Spaniard, not so much by his black eyes and bronzed complexion, as by the guarded and mysterious expression of his physiognomy. It was quite unnecessary for him to tell me that he wished to speak to me without witnesses; and Baptiste had no sooner closed the door behind him than he advanced to the side of the bed, and said in a low voice:—

“*He* greets you; *he* thanks you; through your means he can still pray for his enemies, and for your preservation. If the Holy Virgin should ever permit him to return to Spain, he will remember what you have done for him.’

“I readily understood, as you may imagine, the whole bearing of this mysterious announcement; but I confess that I felt some surprise when my visitor hurried from the room without awaiting a reply. I neither saw nor heard of him afterwards; nor did I, as you may believe, trouble myself further about the matter. The excellent

M. Cailhava died in 1813; and I am sorry to be compelled to say that when, in the following year, Ferdinand VII. once more took possession of his throne, he appeared to have entirely forgotten the somewhat quixotic act of devotion which enabled him to do so; and that, moreover, when one of his own nobles alluded to the subject, he coldly ordered him never again to mention the circumstance in his presence."

Ingratitude is a royal fruit, which ripens too often under the shadow of a crown.

CHAPTER V.

A CONSPIRACY.

"IN the year 1807,"—said the Marquis —, "as you wish me to furnish you with an authentic tradition of the Empire—I must tell you that I was passionately enamored of a very beautiful and very accomplished woman, about whose antecedents, however, I knew nothing. I had met her in some of the best houses in Paris, where she was courted and caressed; and I was perfectly willing to believe that such would not have been the case had those by whom she had been introduced into such circles, not been thoroughly convinced of her perfect eligibility to move in them. Still one thing perplexed and annoyed me more than I can express; and that was the overwhelming influence

which she possessed with the police-ministers, who never refused any request which she made of them. When I became aware of this fact I was half-determined to break with her; but, led away by a passion with which reason and prudence were unable to cope, I made up my mind that it was simply the effect of accident, or the natural result of that fascination which had proved so powerful in my own case.

“Be that as it may, however, it was through her means that I became acquainted with some curious facts relative to the conspiracy against the Prince of the Asturias.

“I one day went to pay her a visit when I was perfectly unexpected; and I at once discovered that my presence was extremely irksome to her. This conviction instantly inflamed my jealousy; I believed that she had some other suitor; and from entreaties I proceeded to reproaches. She bore my violence with composure, although she evidently considered it both discourteous and unjust; and when I paused to take breath, she extended her hand, and said gravely:—

“‘You are jealous, Marquis, and you have no cause to be so, though I frankly confess that you are here at a most unfortunate moment. It is on no love-meeting that you intrude, but a serious diplomatic intrigue. Fouché has requested me to lend him my boudoir for an hour, in order that he may have an interview with a foreigner without any fear of spies. That is the simple fact.’

“I was by no means satisfied with this explanation, and I told her so.

“‘Well;’ she said somewhat angrily; ‘as you appear

resolved to listen to your own suspicions, and have no care for my safety or reputation, I will run the risk of compelling you to blush at your own folly; but we have not a moment to spare. The minister and his companion will be here immediately; go into this closet where you can hear all that passes, and I will lock you in. Do not attempt to obtain a sight of the stranger; as, should you do so, you will scarcely escape being seen yourself; and then both you and I would, in all probability, end our days at Vincennes or Pierre-en-Cise; a fate which to me would, I confess, be peculiarly unpleasant.'

"Surprised by her firmness, and divided between curiosity and mistrust, I hesitated for a moment; but curiosity conquered; or, rather, I may say, in justice to myself, the desire of becoming convinced that I had wronged the woman upon whom, at that period, my whole happiness depended. I accordingly, with a grimace or two, walked into the closet, which had a glazed door with curtains both within and without of tapestry-work; and, after Madame de C—— had turned the key upon me, I threw myself into an arm-chair, where I awaited in considerable agitation the event that was to follow.

"My suspense did not last long; I heard a carriage drive into the court-yard, rapid steps upon the stairs, and, finally, the voice of the Duke d'Otranto, inquiring if all the necessary precautions had been taken; and if my fair friend would guarantee that neither in the house itself, nor its immediate neighborhood, any curious eyes were to be dreaded.

"The coolness with which she answered in the

affirmative rather shook my confidence in her veracity and good faith; for the falsehood, premeditated as it was, did not appear to cost her the slightest compunction.

“‘Where does this door lead to?’ inquired Fouché, alluding to that of the closet in which I was concealed.

“‘It is the door of my *garde-robe*, in which are hanging half-a-dozen dresses that do no discredit to the Parisian modistes;’ was the reply; ‘would you like to look at them?’

“A cold perspiration inundated my forehead at this proposition; I could hear the police-minister walk forward a step or two, and I believed myself to be a lost man; but it is probable that the perfect self-possession of his hostess satisfied him that there was nothing to be feared; for replying: ‘No; no; there is no disputing your taste; and my visitor must not find me discussing the merits of flounces and furbelows’—he seated himself, and began to express his thanks to the lady for her kindness in having acceded to his request; assuring her that the interview which was about to take place under her auspices could not fail to produce very important results.

“A second carriage drove up.

“‘Here comes my man;’ said Fouché; ‘be good enough to meet him and to conduct him here yourself.’

“Madame de C—— was quite ignorant of the identity of the personage to whom she was about to enact the usher, and had left it to my penetration to solve the mystery; in which, however, as the use of my eyes was forbidden to me, I had little hope that I should succeed.

“He entered the room, and he had no sooner spoken than I became convinced that his voice was familiar to me; nor was I mistaken, as I subsequently ascertained that the conspirator was Don Isquiero, the envoy of the Prince of Peace to Paris, and his most zealous partizan. I had met him at the houses of the Prince of Masserano and M. Mercy D’Argenteau, to whom he had brought letters of introduction; and his shrill thin voice had made so disagreeable an impression on my ear that I recognised it at once.

“The conversation soon became interesting. Fouché first inquired what proof Godöy could give of his absolute power in Spain; and by what means he could offer to the Emperor satisfactory pledges of a definitive rupture with the Prince of the Asturias.

“Isquiero commenced by eluding this question, being evidently reluctant to return a positive answer; but Fouché was not a man to be duped, and he at once abruptly repeated his inquiry; upon which the cunning Spaniard, who found himself in the toils, began to say that his master (Don Godöy) had no more earnest wish than that of convincing the great Napoleon of his good faith, of which he was prepared to furnish the most undeniable proofs.

“‘But,’ he asked in his turn, ‘is your sovereign equally sincere towards my master? Is he concealing nothing from him which for their common interest he ought to reveal?’

“‘The Emperor,’ observed Fouché with equal ambiguity, ‘does not possess a single document which can be serviceable to him.’

“‘Oh! pardon me,’ said the emissary of Godöy

jocosely; 'we know, beyond all possibility of doubt, that the Infant has written to the Emperor, and that he has even proposed an alliance with him. If his Imperial Majesty will deliver up this document to my master, it will no sooner be in his possession than he will be powerful enough to arrest the Infant on a charge of high treason.'

"'Do you really mean to say that he would venture to do so?' exclaimed Fouché in a tone of surprise.

"'I do, your Excellency; and also that he could do much more.'

"'What may that be?'

"'All that His Majesty the Emperor may require of him.'

"'A second Don Carlos!' muttered Fouché, in so low a voice that I scarcely heard the words; and it is probable that Isquiero answered by a smile, for he assuredly made no verbal reply.

"There was a temporary silence, during which I shuddered with apprehension and terror, for I understood my peril should I be surprised listening to such a conversation; and on the other hand I felt the most painful sympathy for a young prince whom I believed to be innocent of all crime, and who I saw about to fall into a treacherous snare.

"It was Fouché who resumed: 'Well, monsieur,' he said calmly; 'if that letter can produce such a result, which certainly must raise an eternal barrier between your master and the Infant, it shall be delivered to you, for it is true that we possess it. M. de Beauharnais, the French Ambassador at Madrid, has transmitted to the Emperor an autograph letter of His Royal High-

ness the Prince of the Asturias, in which he has requested His Imperial Majesty to select a wife for him in his august family; and has also expressed great alarm lest his application should come to the knowledge of Don Godöy.'

"That Isquiero was breathless with exultation at the words of Fouché was evident, for although he certainly struggled to suppress them, three or four low sobs escaped him; and when the Police-Minister had concluded his revelation, the wily Spaniard led the conversation towards the project of a treaty, the aim of which was to send Charles IV. to America, on condition that the Principality of the Algarves was to be ceded to the Prince of Peace; who would, when this cession had been accomplished, place himself entirely at the discretion of the Emperor.

"These subjects and many others were successively discussed; and it was placed beyond all doubt that day that the royal family of Spain was betrayed. But by whom? That is a question that I cannot answer. Had Godöy authorised his agent to make these important promises? Was not Isquiero, who had sold himself body and soul to the interests of Napoleon, exceeding his instructions? In one word, was the Prince of Peace innocent or guilty?

"Who shall say?

"This much, at least, is certain—that the cabinet of Madrid received information of the letter written to Napoleon; the original sketch having been found among the papers of the Prince of the Asturias, who was arrested in consequence of this imprudence, and another of equal importance, in which he had argued in writing,

upon the measures which it would be expedient to adopt in case that his sovereign lord and father should die before himself, as in the common course of nature might be anticipated.

“The two proxies at length separated, after having made a new appointment for a future day, and in another place; while I was so exhausted by fatigue and alarm, that I did not even rise from my seat until Madame de C——, after their departure, came to set me at liberty; when, as some compensation for the mental suffering that I had undergone, I reproached her bitterly for having offered to allow Fouché to enter the closet, knowing as she must do that my life would not have been safe in the event of discovery.

“‘You take a wrong view of the case;’ she said with all the composure of a diplomatist;—‘If the Police-Minister had detected you, I could never have been suspected, since I offered to open the closet; but I exaggerated my fears in order to make you more prudent. As to yourself, as every one knows that you profess to love me, and could not have the slightest notion of this political intrigue, it would have been supposed that you were jealous, and had concealed yourself to watch me. Remember, moreover, that when I offered the key of the closet to Fouché, the Spaniard had not yet made his appearance; so that you would have been well laughed at, and there would have been an end of the matter.’

“I did not agree with her at the time; and I am still convinced that had Fouché discovered me in my hiding-place, even had he not considered it expedient to treat the affair seriously he would have nevertheless consi-

dered my presence at that particular moment more than equivocal in its tendency ; and such a suspicion once engendered in the mind of the Duke d'Otranto was tantamount to condemnation.

“I felt angry and irritated with Madame de C—— for having, as I declared, unnecessarily placed me in a position of such peril, when I should rather have accused my own wilful imprudence ; and was chafed and angered by the composure with which she talked of an affair that might have proved my destruction.

“Was I safe ? Perhaps so ; but my nerves had been so severely shaken that I refused to leave the house before daybreak ; so much did I apprehend that there might still be some emissaries of the Police-Minister in its neighborhood.

“Ha ! you wish to know if I still remained the slave of my passion for Madame de C—— ? I will be frank with you. I did not. I had loved the woman, but a few hours had taught me to loathe the actress. What confidence could I place in a mistress who could hold head against Fouché ? Who could lie without a blush, and betray those who had trusted to her good faith without the hesitation of a second ?

“If deeds of blood were not actually perpetrated in her house they were at least planned there ; and my ideas of a home had never included incidents of this nature. No, I did not marry her ; and I have reason to believe that the biography of the bold man who did so would be one of an extraordinary nature. So that, after all, you see I am under some obligation to Fouché.

CHAPTER VI.

AN IMPERIAL DECREE.

IN the month of March, 1808, appeared the Imperial Decree which definitively re-constructed the Monarchy upon its original basis, and consolidated its strength by the indispensable institution of an hereditary nobility; and nothing could perhaps have produced a more extraordinary effect upon the public mind than this proof that the result of the Revolution was simply the successive resuscitation of all which that great national convulsion had overthrown. Already France had an Emperor instead of a King; the Order of the Legion of Honor instead of those of the Holy Ghost and St. Louis; and finally, an aristocracy was to be created which would be improvised by a Decree!

This military mode of constituting a peerage was a terrible blow to the denizens of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, whose antediluvian notions of nobility were associated with long descent, numerous quarterings, and family tradition; and they at once decided that they could not acknowledge as equally valid, titles which had been gained by prowess in the field, and those which were bestowed upon mere civilians. To the first, as they declared, they could reconcile themselves, almost every distinguished house having earned its honors originally by the sword; while they regarded

the others as mere plebeians, whom they asserted that "M. Bonaparté" might re-christen as he pleased without being able to ennoble their nature, or to render them fitting associates for the descendants of the Montmorencies, the Rohans, and the Créquys.

They could not, however, overcome their fear for the future when they reflected on the incontestable personal valor of the individuals likely to be selected by the Emperor among his generals, for they instantly understood that no sovereign would dispense with their support, even should France cease to be an empire. The marshals who fought under the League did not resign their bâtons when Henry IV. ascended the throne as the recognised King of France; and it was certain that the leaders of Napoleon's army would be equally indispensable to a Bourbon sovereign.

The greatest anxiety pervaded all classes before the promulgation of the Imperial will; and finally, on the 11th of March, the Arch-chancellor, President of the Senate, having convoked a General Assembly, delivered a speech, in which he declared that "the new order of things would raise no barrier between the citizens; and would in no way interfere with the rights which rendered all Frenchmen equal before the law; but that a brilliant career would always remain open to individuals of virtue and useful talents."

The Imperial Decree, which was dated three days earlier, stated that the Grand Dignitaries of the Empire would assume the titles of Prince and Serene Highness; that the dukes should receive an income of two hundred thousand francs (a clause which was never executed); and that the titles of Count, Baron, and

Knight, should be restored; these were, however, degraded from the commencement, as they could be obtained easily by money. Consequently, fortune, and not merit, was to transmit the hereditary distinction; and it was to be foreseen that the ranks of the new nobility would be inevitably invaded by the host of fortunate speculators, who had enriched themselves during the Revolution. The Decree formally classified the functions which would confer a right to each separate title; announced the armorial bearings which were to be adopted; and subsequently, the coronets which had ceased to have any signification, were replaced by caps.

The whole kingdom was convulsed on the reading of this Decree. The Jacobins were indignant, and the Royalists were disgusted; but there was no remedy for the evil to either party; while those who were sincerely favorable to the new dynasty did not hesitate to declare their conviction that there were no other rational means of consolidating a throne which, however lofty it might seem, could not be considered as perfectly stable in its foundations.

“Three years previously,” said Count D——, “just after the first Austrian campaign, and when peace was about to be concluded, I was in the habit of frequenting the Café de Foy, where I made the acquaintance of an elderly man of remarkably handsome person, who stated himself to be a German. This foreigner was evidently anxious to render himself agreeable to me, while he affected to be ignorant of the fact that I was a member of the Imperial household. His society was always welcome, for he had travelled nearly over the world,

and had visited every Court in Europe. He was a deep-thoughted and observant man, and spoke more enthusiastically of kings and queens, of the splendor of royalty, and the niggardly meanness of republics, than on any other subject.

“One evening, when we had taken our ices at the same table, he suddenly exclaimed: ‘Are you aware, Monsieur, that the European sovereigns consider the Imperial Court very insignificant? What is a sovereign who constitutes in himself his aristocracy and his household? Is it not an absurdity that there is not a noble, not a title to be met with there except his own? What a painful contrast does it offer to the other Imperial and royal establishments of the Continent! I should like to have an audience of the Emperor for half an hour to represent this fact to him, and to impress upon him its probable consequences; or to meet with some one sufficiently in his confidence to acquaint him with the secret of the other European Courts.’

“‘And what is this secret?’ I asked without hesitation, convinced that he was perfectly cognisant of my official position, and that I could not consequently be guilty of any indiscretion in making the inquiry.

“‘It is easily told,’ was the ready reply; ‘and in point of fact scarcely deserves the name. This it is then: that so long as Napoleon delays to re-establish titles of nobility, armorial bearings, and an equestrian order, so long his government will remain isolated in Europe. The greatness of the Emperor will be merely personal, and will have struck no roots into the soil; in one word, the Emperor of the French will always be considered merely as the Chief of a Republic. He

must reflect upon this. His subjects themselves are anxious to see him definitively cast off everything which tends to recall the memory of the Republic; and he will do well to remember that in aggrandising the Empire, he has annexed countries in which aristocratic forms and habits are always regretted.'

"As he ceased speaking he rose and left me without giving me time to reply; and I felt more than ever assured that he considered his mission to be accomplished, from the fact that he never again appeared at the Café de Foy. My impression then was, and I still retain it, that he was the secret agent of some sovereign, instructed to convey to Napoleon, through the medium of a third person, the opinion of the foreign potentates at a period when a number of matrimonial projects with the Bonaparte family were rumored on all sides.

"Some time subsequently, it might have been perhaps a fortnight afterwards, when I was on duty at la Malmaison, where the rules of etiquette were less scrupulously observed than in Paris, the Emperor inquired of me if I had anything new to tell him.

"'Very little, Sire;' was my reply, 'except, if your Majesty will allow me to say so, that I begin to think the crowned heads of Europe have appointed me their Ambassador.'

"'What am I to understand? What do you mean?' he demanded impatiently.

"I related to him my adventure at the café, without omitting a single detail.

"He listened with evident interest, and as I concluded he exclaimed: 'Who was this man? You should have followed him, and ascertained—what was he like?'

“I confess that on this occasion I did not punctually obey the orders of the Emperor, as I had a horror of finding myself compromised in any police affair; and I accordingly drew rather upon my imagination than my memory in the description which I gave of my mysterious acquaintance.

“So ended the adventure; and I had almost forgotten it until it was recalled to my mind by the Imperial Decree which ennobled so many of my countrymen, and by the words of Napoleon himself, who said to me with a smile: ‘Well, I suppose that your friend of the Café de Foy will be satisfied now, and *my brothers* also.’”

The Faubourg Saint-Germain resented the indignity which had been offered to their patrician prejudices, by overwhelming with the most superb disdain the newly-created nobles. The Duchess de Chevreuse desired her waiting-woman to inform her laundress that she should no longer entrust her with her linen, until she became a countess; and the Count de Brissac addressed to his bootmaker a note, commencing with the words:—

“My dear Baron, do not fail to bring me my boots to-morrow.”

And when, on the following day, the astonished tradesman assured him that he had been the recipient of no such title, de Brissac exclaimed with elegant impertinence:—

“Can that be possible? You really astonish me! Console yourself, however, Maizenat, for rest assured that you will be included in the next baking.”

Some young men who were intimate at the Hôtel de

Luynes, sent a number of magnificent bouquets to certain of the market-women, with letters of congratulation on the titles which had been bestowed upon their relatives; and these pasquinades greatly amused their authors; while it must be admitted that many members of the improvised aristocracy rendered themselves sufficiently absurd to afford a fair field for the ridicule of the royalists.

There can be no doubt that of all the nations of Europe, France is the least adapted to Republican simplicity; gaud and glitter are as indispensable to the happiness of a Frenchman as bread and Bordeaux wine; and a high-sounding title is so agreeable to the palate even of a *bourgeois*, that when he is brought into contact with a noble, and addresses him as "Your Highness," or "Monseigneur," he does it with an emphasis and an air of self-gratulation, which would lead a stander-by to believe that the fortunate individual considered himself to be ennobled by the mere privilege of uttering the magic words.

The creation of the Imperial aristocracy necessarily wounded the vanity of many who considered that their merits had not been adequately acknowledged, and gave birth to a host of jealousies and sarcasms; but the restoration of heraldic distinctions was welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm even by those who had been the most active in their destruction; the relatives of the new nobles were, above all, the first to exult, as, since the Revolution, although a species of personal nobility had been recognised, there had been no hereditary right to the honors earned by the individual himself; and a father had consequently no means of

bequeathing to his successor more than the memory of his own greatness. Now, however, that envied greatness was no longer to be a simple family tradition; after-centuries were to perpetuate the glories which had been gained by its founder; while, moreover, although the list of what the Germans denominate "newly-baked" dignitaries, was extensive enough to form a very respectable *entourage* to the Imperial throne, it still was not so profuse as to discredit the institution in its infancy; nor can there be any doubt that it exercised a very salutary influence on the public mind; for, as those upon whom the honors of aristocracy had been conferred, considered themselves bound to assume a dignity and propriety of bearing, about which they had previously been careless; so, the fear of derogating from the respectability of their new "order," induced a certain moral severity by which all classes could not fail to benefit; and which, at the same time, proved a most efficient aid to the measures of the government; while the prospect of after-aggrandizement to all who were not included in the original patent excited a spirit of emulation to win their spurs by the same public services.

On the other hand the commerce of the capital profited largely by the institution; and many trades which had ceased to exist since the overthrow of the Monarchy were resumed with increased activity. In one article alone, that of gold lace, which had totally disappeared, millions of yards were ordered for the decoration of Court suits and State liveries; and throughout the whole Empire it is asserted that General d'Adoville alone, did not exceed his annual expendi-

ture by a single sous when he received his title of Count. In every other case luxury made rapid progress; and a love of splendor and display, which was undisguisedly encouraged by Napoleon, spread so widely and simultaneously, that the vanity of the comparatively few conduced to the profit, and became the example of the many.

So much for the serious side of the question; and as we know that "there is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous," we will now turn to the reverse of the medal. Everything in this world should be looked at on both sides; and assuredly no one who was not fortunate enough to be in the society of a duke, a count, or a baron of the Empire within the first eight-and-forty hours of his accession to the title, can form a correct idea of the elasticity of human vanity. The satisfied ambition and affected modesty struggling for masterdom, afforded a singular study for the physiological student, and was well calculated to make even the gravest smile; but this was faint in comparison with the amusement afforded by the extravagances of the duchesses, the countesses, and the baronesses. Several among the men took lessons from the celebrated actor Fleury in the art of gracefully wearing a court-dress; but as for the women, they thoroughly emulated the frog in the fable; and more than one of them would have disowned Eve herself as their common mother because she never bore a title.

The wife of Marshal Massena purchased a dozen dresses of old brocade (such as were in vogue at Court in the time of Madame de Pompadour), which were constantly to be seen spread out upon chairs in a passage

leading to her bed-room, as if to air; and when she was asked what she was going to do with them—a question which was repeated more than once after the curiosity of the first visitor had been so characteristically satisfied—she replied carelessly:—

“Do with them? Oh, nothing at all; but they belonged to my grandmother; and I want to keep them as long as I can for her sake.”

One baroness, probably from a latent affection for that peculiar kitchen utensil, caused the arms of her husband to be emblazoned upon the rolling-pin with which her cook prepared his pastry; and a countess, who when ennobled was engaged in an intrigue with the *valet-de-chambre* of one of the Emperor's chamberlains, not satisfied with giving him her portrait in court-costume, caused the heraldic bearings of M. le Comte to be inserted at the back of the locket on a ground of blue enamel.

The said heraldic bearings were, moreover, of the most singular and heterogeneous description; the mottoes being in some instances a rebus, and in others an allusion to the origin of their owner's fortune; but these were among the most modest and unpretending claimants to chivalric honors; for there were not wanting several who appropriated to themselves the time-honored insignia of some of the most illustrious families of France. These, however, were not long suffered to glory in the profanation; as Napoleon, morbidly sensitive to the ridicule as well as to the resentment of the true lords of the soil, ordered all such devices as had been in use under the Bourbons to be discontinued; and commanded that new ones should, in all cases, be substituted.

Books on heraldry produced fabulous prices, as the inventive genius of the arm-hunters was by no means so great as the strength of their muscles or the length of their purses ; and nothing could be more entertaining to those of the *ancien régime* than to hear pretty lips, not always conveying the most accurate or high-bred French, endeavoring to familiarise themselves with the crabbed terms contained in those works, and repeating them to the intense delight of the father behind his counter, and the mother in her wash-house ; and to the supreme astonishment of clerks and shopmen, once the playmates of the young and erudite ladies of high rank who still condescended to remember their existence. Of course they might just as well have listened to so much Hebrew ; but as they naturally imagined that this must be the language used at Court, they could only shrug their shoulders, and whisper among themselves that they greatly preferred the intelligible idiom of the *banlieue*.

One worthy soap-dealer returned thanks to his daughter for having embellished the pannels of her carriage with the golden arm which figured above his shop-door ; although he at the same ventured to express his regret, that from an ill-judged motive of economy, she should only have had it painted to look like iron ; declaring that had she told him what she was about to do, he would cheerfully have paid the difference himself.

We need scarcely say that it was the military crest of his gallant son-in-law ; a gloved hand grasping a sword !

CHAPTER VII.

PETER THE FISHERMAN.

“ I PASSED the memorable year 1813 at Dresden, of which city I am a native,” said the intelligent and amiable man to whom we are indebted for the present narrative; “ and it was my unhappy fate to become an eye-witness of all the calamities with which the town was visited from the arrival of Marshal Davoust at the head of twelve thousand men, until the capitulation of Gouvion-Saint-Cyr.

“ I was at that period still a young man, but having lost my parents at a very early age, I had already travelled, and had practised as a surgeon for two years at St. Petersburg.

“ Neither the habits nor the climate of Russia being congenial to me, I then resolved to return home; and in September, 1812, I found myself once more in the capital of Saxony, decidedly the most agreeable of all the German cities; and, moreover, dear to me from early associations and memories. To the mere traveller, however, Dresden must be full of attraction, with its delicious climate, its picturesque environs, its majestic river, its superb bridge, resting so gracefully upon its six admirably-proportioned arches; its palaces and gardens, its costly library, and its picture and sculpture galleries; the only remarkable collection in Europe

respected by Napoleon, which has obtained for Dresden the well-merited title of the Florence of the North.

“ Even in the December of 1812, I foresaw that my native city would become the centre of the French military operations in the last struggle of Napoleon to preserve the sovereignty of the European Continent; and the event too fully justified my melancholy forebodings. By the fortresses of Torgau, Wittemburg, and Magdeburg, he commanded the course of the Elbe, and he could advance or recede on either bank at will. The Saxon capital being a populous city, and well supplied with all the necessaries of existence by the extreme fertility of the surrounding country, would afford abundant means of subsistence to his troops, and of hospitals for his wounded; while the fortified positions of Pirna, Lilicastein, Konigstein, and Stolpein, formed in the environs an extensive entrenched camp for his numerous troops, whence he could easily march detachments against Prague, Berlin, and Breslau. The result of the fearful battle fought near Bautzen, in the month of May, was the arrival at Dresden of twenty thousand wounded soldiers; and as my profession was known, I was engaged by the French authorities to assist in attending them. Those who were only slightly hurt, or attacked by illness, the result of fatigue and exposure, were billeted on the inhabitants of the town, by which means it became one vast infirmary; and all were treated with as much kindness and liberality as the rapidly decreasing resources of their compulsory hosts would permit; but the regular hospitals were so overcrowded, and the difficulty of administering to the wants of all was so great, that it would be impossible to

describe the horrible spectacle which they presented during the siege.

“ Conscious, however, that I exerted all my energies in their behalf; and that they wanted nothing which it was in my power to procure for them, or any relief from their sufferings that my professional knowledge could effect, it was really astonishing to witness the gratitude of men who were no sooner saved from immediate death, than they risked in a few months, and sometimes only in a few weeks afterwards, the life thus preserved, with the utmost apparent indifference.

“ Among others, an old non-commissioned officer, whom Marshal Lobau treated rather as a friend than as an inferior, having, after a month of acute suffering, regained his health under my care, saw fit to attribute his recovery entirely to what he called my wonderful skill, without doing justice either to nature, or to his own courage and fortitude. This gallant veteran always addressed me by the name of ‘Father;’ an appellation which so much diverted his comrades (who were aware that the word would have been far more applicable from my own lips when our respective ages were considered) that I was soon known by no other throughout the regiment; and not one of the brave fellows ever thought of saying ‘Here is Doctor Wolmar,’ or ‘Doctor Wolmar ordered it;’ but invariably ‘Here is Larive’s Papa,’ or ‘Papa ordered it.’ If a patient died under my hands the serjeant always declared that it was because he had thought proper to do so; and, in short, if any one took the trouble to listen to him he would almost have persuaded his auditor that I was Esculapius in person.

“ Since my return from St. Petersburg I had lived in private lodgings ; and the room in which I slept when I was not on duty at the hospital, commanded a noble view of the bridge and the vine-covered heights on the other side of the Elbe. It was one of those old houses with high and slanting roofs so common in Germany ; containing several garrets, of which the upper one was occupied by a poor old man, who gained his scanty subsistence by fishing in the river. He had a granddaughter, a girl of about eighteen years of age, called Meta, whose look and manner were indicative of idiocy, but who was employed by the proprietor of the house out of sheer compassion, in performing trifling services for his lodgers. This indigent pair had only resided a few months in Dresden, and no one knew anything positive about them ; but it was generally believed that they had seen better days, and that some sudden and unforeseen misfortune had unsettled the reason of the poor young girl, leaving her only just intelligence enough to fulfil the easy duties with which she was entrusted.

“ Meta was so pretty and so helpless that I became anxious to ascertain if it were beyond the power of the medical art to restore her to the full, or at least the partial, possession of her intellect, and I consequently watched her with untiring curiosity ; while the longer I did so, the more I became convinced that there was some mystery about her. I occasionally addressed her when she brought up my breakfast or my letters, and for some time her unmeaning answers, and the vacant smile which hovered upon her lips, convinced me, predisposed as I was by what I had been told, to believe

that she was indeed an idiot. She was always dressed in the coarse and ungainly gown of a Saxon peasant, but I nevertheless soon discovered that neither her features, her figure, nor her manners belonged to that class of society. Her height was rather above that of the generality of her sex, and so far as it was possible to judge, shrouded as it was beneath the cumbrous garments that she wore, it was slight and elegant. Her voice was clear and sweet; and the expression of her face was soft and pleasant, when it was not destroyed by the unmeaning smile to which I have already made allusion. It was evident, from several idioms which occasionally escaped her, and which were decidedly those of another land, that Meta was not a native of Germany; and, in short, an attentive observer could not fail to perceive that she had about her a self-respect and delicacy totally out of keeping with her present station in life.

“Nothing of the kind was, however, to be detected in the rough and surly old man whom Meta called her grandfather. A wide and heavy coat of coarse cloth, the usual costume of his class, covered his tall and robust figure, while his face was almost entirely concealed by his long pendant locks of grey hair and his bushy beard, which time had blanched to the same hue. He was dumb, or so nearly so that the sounds which he emitted, when at rare intervals he was betrayed into excitement, resembled rather the deep growling of a wild beast than the voice of a human being; and he was soon known throughout Dresden as Peter the Dumb Fisherman. As he occasionally brought the produce of his lines for sale to the different hospi-

tals, the French soldiers with their usual gaiety, which had affixed upon me the sobriquet of Papa, conferred upon him the honors of canonization; and whenever he made his appearance they saluted him by the name of St. Peter.

“This old man also became one of my patients, but I cannot include him among those whose gratitude I have already recorded. Scarcely did he even favor me by a bow of thanks when his cure was completed, and he was once more able to pursue his avocation; but such was far from being the case with his granddaughter, who appeared to feel that it was her duty to convince me that my kindness had not been unappreciated by herself; for from that moment she devoted herself with untiring zeal to supply my wants, and to obey my wishes. Gradually her smile became less vague; and when I entered into conversation with her she either cast down her eyes, or riveted them upon me with intense thoughtfulness, while a deep blush overspread her face.

“I was not the only person who noticed this change in her manner when she was occupied in my service; and one day Sergeant Larive, who always came to pay his respects to me when he was not on duty, ventured to say somewhat jocosely: ‘Why, Papa, will you never be weary of working miracles? It seems to me that you can restore reason to young ladies as well as life to the soldiers.’

“I now began to hope that I should, by judicious and well-timed questions, induce Meta to confide to me the circumstances which had reduced herself and her grandfather to their present unhappy condition; but

vainly did my curiosity assume an accent of the most tender interest ; vainly did I ask her where she was born, and if she had other relatives who would take charge of her in the event of the old man's death ; instead of making any reply, she only burst into tears, covered her face with her hands, and hurried from the room.

“ Insensibly, the charms of this extraordinary and mysterious girl—who for all save myself was a mere senseless idiot, separated from her fellow-beings by a visitation which left her little more than the outward semblance of humanity—inspired me with a romantic feeling of interest, in which I found consolation in the midst of my painful and harassing duties, which were continued through the fearful summer, and still more fearful autumn of that eventful year. I shall not dwell upon the details of the memorable siege of Dresden ; they are matters of history, and have employed more skilful pens than mine ; but shall confine myself to the narrative which I have undertaken to relate to you.

“ By the commencement of November the allies had invested the avenues of the city with a formidable force ; while the French army, still amounting to thirty thousand men, under Marshal Gouvion-Saint-Cyr, and Count Lobau, were shut up within the boundaries of the fortifications of the town ; which, since the besiegers had cut off all communication with the adjacent country, was threatened with frightful privations, having almost exhausted its provisions, its fire-wood, and its drugs.

“ On the night of the 3rd of November at about ten

o'clock I left the *café* at which I had been spending the evening with a friend, in order to return to my lodgings; when, on passing the palace of Count Bruhl, which was then occupied by the Commander-in-Chief, my attention was attracted by an unusual blaze of light in the reception-rooms, and the trampling of feet in the entrance-hall. As I lingered for a moment, wondering what could be the cause of so much confusion and excitement, I saw my friend the sergeant slowly approach me; and the next moment he whispered in my ear:—

“‘What should you say, Papa, if I were to require your services again to-morrow?’

“‘What is going forward?’ I asked in my turn.

“‘The Marshal, the Count Lobau, and the other big epaulettes have just held a council of war; and everything gives me reason to believe that we are going to breathe a little fresh air to-night. I hope it may be so; for I swear to you that your beautiful city begins to feel a little too close for an old trooper like me.’

“‘And you suppose, comrade;’ said I; ‘that the enemy will in all probability disturb your stroll; and that, fated as you are to bring away a trace of every skirmish in which you happen to be engaged, there is perhaps a ball preserved for you in some Russian cartouche-box.’

“‘I expect as much;’ was the cool reply; ‘but are you not on the spot to supply me with a wooden leg or a wooden arm, whichever I may chance to want? Be good enough, however, to recollect that I bespeak my old bed in your ward, from which neither a one-legged nor a one-armed man has yet been turned adrift to

finish up his campaigns at the *Invalides*. But I must say good-night; I was not put on guard here to gossip; and yonder comes the Captain of the Day.'

"So saying, and giving me at the same time a hearty shake of the hand, Larive turned away, and entered the guard-room.

"One of my brother-surgeons, whom I encountered a few minutes afterwards, informed me more positively that a sortie of twelve thousand men would probably take place at one in the morning.

"When I reached home, a vague uneasiness mingled with the excitement produced by the intelligence which I had just received. It was like the foreshadowing of some personal misfortune; and yet what had so obscure an individual as myself to apprehend? True, I must share in the general danger of all those who inhabited a besieged city, should that city be compelled to surrender; but I could not discover that it was this conviction which had cast such a sudden gloom over my mind; I had long been so thoroughly inured to the sight of suffering, that I should have despised myself could I for one moment have shrunk from it in my own person. No; I was not thinking or fearing for myself. What could it be then? Was I to attribute it to the interest which I felt for the safety of the brave old sergeant, and the thought of the new perils to which he was about to be exposed? Was it not rather that, when I entered my modest parlor, Meta was not there as usual, to give me my chamber candle, and to wish me good-night? Where was she? What false shame had prevented me from reclaiming her services? I grew more and more agitated. Could it really be that

I felt for Meta a more serious passion than I had hitherto ventured to admit even to myself?

“It seemed to me that, in order to shake off all these bewildering thoughts, nothing would suffice save the excitement of the forthcoming engagement; and I consequently resolved to sally forth once more, and to take up my position at a prudent distance from the fortifications, that I might lose the sense of my own anxieties in the weightier interests of the stupendous struggle which was about to take place. ‘And perhaps,’ I murmured to myself, ‘when I again enter my chamber Meta may have returned.’

“I had already put on my cloak and hat, when about midnight I heard a hollow rumbling noise awakening the dull echoes of the deserted streets. It was the passage of several pieces of ordnance, with their ammunition waggons, the wheels carefully wrapped with straw, slowly making their way to the bridge. I ran down stairs; and, walking rapidly through some cross-streets, I reached, under cover of the darkness, the centre of the bridge, where an arch, which Davoust had blown up in the previous Spring, was replaced by a strong oak planking, flanked by lofty palisades. Wrapping my cloak closely about me, I concealed myself in one of the angles of the parapet; and there I awaited the arrival of the artillery, convinced that the surrounding gloom would render my hiding-place secure.

“Suddenly I heard the shock of a heavy body against the palisades, and I distinguished the sound of voices under the bridge. The dense atmosphere of a stormy November night, and the whistling of a violent north-east wind, prevented me from discovering the cause of

these strange noises; but when the artillery shortly afterwards passed by, and had gained the opposite bank, I looked and listened with redoubled attention towards the palisades. What was my surprise, I will even say my alarm, when I saw one of the oaken planks slowly rise from its place! At the same instant the violence of the wind dispersed the vapors; and, the new moon shining down upon the bridge, I saw the tall figure of Peter the Fisherman emerge from the opening.

“He was no sooner standing upright beside the trap from which he had risen, than some one held towards him a long pole, which he leant over the parapet, after having carefully replaced the plank; and he then assumed the attitude of an angler throwing his line into the water.

“At this moment I distinguished the heavy and measured tramp of a body of troops at the extremity of the bridge next the city, and I saw the pale rays of the moon reflected on the arms of the French vanguard.

“Still shrouded closely in my dark cloak, in the deep shadow of the recess in which I had taken up my station, the first battalion defiled silently before me, and my heart beat anxiously; while, as the leading rank reached the line of planks which had replaced the missing arch, the old fisherman began to utter his inarticulate and guttural jargon; holding his pole in one hand, and his shapeless hat in the other, as if soliciting charity.

“‘Ah! here is St. Peter trying to fish!’ exclaimed a grenadier.

“‘I think that to-night,’ replied a comrade, ‘he will find he is fishing in troubled waters.’

“ ‘Poor fellow!’ said a third; ‘we must not quite suffer him to lose his time. Here,’ he continued, throwing a copper coin into the hat; ‘here is a hook that every two-footed fish will nibble at.’

“Others followed his example; each rank as it passed had its jest and its offering for the deaf and dumb fisherman; who, as the small pieces of money fell into his well-worn beaver, uttered a hoarse growl of thanks, more in the voice of a wolf than that of a human being.

“At length an officer mounted upon a remarkably fine charger, whom I instantly recognised as the Count Lobau, passed so close to the old mendicant that I thought he was about to ride over him; when he suddenly drew in his rein, and turning towards one of his aides-de-camp, asked in a stern and angry voice: ‘Who is this man? And what is he doing here?’

“ ‘General,’ was the reply; ‘he is an old rascal upon whom I have long had my eye. He is deaf and dumb; and our men have often bestowed upon him money which they could ill afford to spare, and which he has received as though all the business of his life was to pay it back in hate. Shall I order him to be thrown over the bridge?’

“I began to tremble for Peter, who did not appear to have the slightest perception of what was going forward, when my friend the sergeant, advancing from the ranks, and presenting arms, addressed Marshal Lobau, saying firmly:—

“ ‘I hope you will pardon me, General, and excuse my boldness; but the man before you is only a poor dumb maniac, well-known in Dresden as Peter the Fisherman, and as harmless as I am.’

“‘Noble fellow!’ I murmured to myself. ‘He is thinking of me while he is thus interceding for the grandfather of Meta.’

“Count Lobau and his staff passed on, followed by the remainder of the battalion, who took no further notice of old Peter.

“The passage of about ten thousand men and two hundred guns necessarily occupied a considerable time; but, finally, all alike disappeared in the distance, when my attention became solely occupied by the movements of the mysterious fisherman. Suddenly I saw him lean his rod over the parapet, and with a lever once more raise the plank which had been previously lifted to enable him to gain the bridge; then, kneeling over the aperture, the dumb man, to my intense surprise, called out in a smothered voice, but in excellent Russ:—

“‘Katinka! Katinka! Is all ready?’

“‘Yes, yes, grandfather; there is a fish upon every hook;’ replied the shriller accents of a female.

“Rising hastily from his knees, the old man seized his long pole, which he placed in a perpendicular position; and, instead of fish, I saw at the end of the pole three small lanterns which emitted a strong light. They were attached to lines of different lengths, but at equal distances from each other. Leaning on the lower extremity of the pole, the old man remained upright and motionless until he saw a brilliant rocket ascend into the sky from a height above the opposite bank of the Elbe, which was followed by a number of fireworks, succeeding each other on the mountains of Meissen, that filled the atmosphere with dazzling sheets and

lines of light, which were reflected in the troubled current of the river.

“Advancing a step or two at this unexpected spectacle, I saw the old man waving his long pole above his head until the lanterns were extinguished by the frantic rapidity of his movements. As he had, perhaps unconsciously in the excitement of the moment, moved to a considerable distance from the species of trap by which he had ascended to the bridge, I was in the act of approaching the opening, when I saw a second figure appearing through the dark chasm; it was that of a woman, from whose long and unbanded hair the water fell in heavy drops upon the planks; and whose garments, saturated with wet, and clinging closely to her person, revealed a form of the most delicate and symmetrical proportions.

“I have already stated that the young clear moon shone out at intervals through the drifting vapors; and now, by her opportune assistance, I at once recognised my beloved and mysterious Meta.

“‘In heaven’s name, Meta;’ I exclaimed; ‘what are you doing here? By what fatal chance—’ but before I could add another word, and without making any immediate reply, the poor girl laid her hand upon my lips, and dragged me with all the strength she could command several paces towards the city.

“‘Be silent if you would save your life, Wolmar,’ she gasped out when we had reached the centre of the last arch; ‘the old man has nearly replaced the plank. Fly, my best and only friend, for should he obtain even a glimpse of you, he would not hesitate to murder you;’ and then, trembling even more from terror than

from cold, Meta threw herself into my arms repeating: 'Fly, my friend; fly!'

"Had she been an utter stranger to me; had I not felt at that moment still more keenly than ever the wild passion with which she had inspired me, I could not have abandoned her in so deplorable a condition. Hastily unclasping my cloak, I folded it about her; while the old man, eagerly watching the last rockets which the besieging army were still throwing up from the heights above Grossenhayn, cried out in a voice like thunder:—

"'There they are! There they are! Eleven thousand of those incarnate demons—of those incendiary murderers! Fall upon them—slaughter them, my brave compatriots, and give no quarter! Revenge yourselves, revenge yourselves, revenge the flames of Holy Moscow—the barbarous massacre of my son; of the sons of my son; of my wife; and of my two daughters. Strike! strike! in the name of God and St. Andrew.'

"When he had yelled forth these fearful words with all the frenzy of a maniac, Peter the Fisherman, as he had so long been called, threw his lanterns into the river, and turned towards the city. His task was ended—his deed of blood was done—and he had, unfortunately, recovered sufficient composure to perceive Meta and myself as we still stood side by side, she endeavoring to regain a little strength and self-command, and refusing to accept the support of my arm lest she should retard my flight; and I urging upon her the necessity of forthwith returning to her home. In an instant, with a spring like that of a panther, he stood before us.

“ ‘Katinka ;’ he demanded furiously ; ‘ who is this man ? What has he seen ? What have you told him ? Wretch ! You have betrayed me, and we shall both be shot before sunset to-morrow—fortunately, however, there is yet time to make one life pay for two ;’ he pursued, in a voice so hoarse and guttural that it instantly recalled the unearthly sounds to which he gave utterance during his assumed mutism ; while at the same instant he clutched his pole with both hands, and endeavored to fell me to the ground.

“ Fortunately my good angel was at my side ; for quick as lightning, Meta flung herself on the old man, and by a sudden shock turned aside the fearful weapon which, escaping from his grasp, fell to the ground.

“ At that moment a heavy cannonade was heard in the distance ; while the rattle of horses’ hoofs, and the roll of artillery were audible at the other extremity of the bridge ; they were the first fugitives of the eleven thousand men of Count Lobau, who had been repulsed on the Drachenberg, having found the Russians prepared to receive them, and masters of all the defiles.

“ Meta had fainted, worn out by fatigue and excitement ; and, without turning even a look on the old man, I took her in my arms, and hastened with all the speed I could command towards the city.

“ Avoiding all the sentinels by passing through the most obscure streets and lanes with which I was familiar, I at length reached the residence of an aged aunt, who, from my boyhood had never lost an opportunity of showing me the greatest and most maternal kindness. Informed by a servant of this extraordinary intrusion at so strange an hour, she lost no time in

leaving her bed, which she at once resigned to the suffering girl; who, on regaining consciousness, was attacked by a nervous fever, by which she was prostrated during three days.

“On my return to my lodgings the following morning, I explained that I had been on duty at the hospital; when my landlord drew me on one side, and informed me of the disappearance of Meta.

“‘No one knows what has become of her;’ he said mysteriously; ‘but as to her grandfather, there is plenty of news of him. He was a spy: could you ever have suspected such a thing? It was he who warned the Russians; and he was found on the bridge in such a state of agitation and bewilderment that he fancied he was discovered, and talked as you or I might have done, praising God and St. Andrew for the victory of his countrymen, instead of growling like a wild beast, as he has done for so many months. Depend upon it that he will not be kept long in suspense, but that his business will be settled in four-and-twenty hours.’

“He was right. On the following day the pretended fisherman, having obstinately refused to answer the questions which were put to him, was shot; and at the same time a placard was posted up, attributing the failure of the sortie of the previous night to treason, and promising a recompense to any one who should denounce the accomplices of the Russian spy. My uneasiness regarding Meta was intense; and it was only by slow degrees, and with extreme caution, that I could break to her the frightful truth; to her who had so long been a victim to the fanaticism of the only

relative left to her on earth, and who now possessed neither friend nor protector save myself.

“After ten days of irresolution and alarm; after having formed a thousand projects, each more impracticable than the last, I resolved not to lay myself open to suspicions which might prove fatal to me, and moreover destroy the reputation of Meta. My first confidant was my friend the sergeant, who on this occasion, despite his forebodings, had returned safe and sound to his old quarters. Larive looked grave for a moment; and then stroking his moustache, he said confidently:—

“‘Egad, Papa, I began by seeking for a cross-road to turn the position, but I know nothing about beating round the bush, and I think the best way after all is to march straight forward to the end. Don’t let us put the matter off till to-morrow, but go together at once to the quarters of General Lobau; and I’ll tell you by the way, how I mean to open the action.’

“I followed the sergeant and we were readily admitted.

“Count Lobau was alone in his cabinet, engaged in writing, and his back was to the door when we entered. At the sound of our approach he raised his head; and, in a mirror which hung opposite to his seat, I caught a distinct view of his countenance. Never had I seen him look so stern; and I began to wish that we had postponed our visit until a more fortunate moment. It was, however, too late to retreat; so, pausing upon the threshold of the apartment, I suffered the sergeant to precede me.

“‘Ah! here you are then, my old comrade;’ said the

General kindly ; 'I am glad to see you. What news do you bring me ?'

" 'None, General ; I am only come to reclaim, with your leave, an ancient promise.'

" 'I understand ; but do not imagine for an instant that I had forgotten it, as you would perceive were you to see what I have just written. Trust me, Larive, you will find me a grateful debtor.'

" 'In that case, General ;' said Larive, moving aside, and pointing towards me ; 'let my companion be your creditor.'

"I made a profound bow, which was returned by the count, who looked surprised, and as though quite at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the veteran.

" 'Dr. Wolmar is well known to me,' he said courteously ; 'not only by sight, but also by the reports which have been made to me of his skill and zeal in the performnace of his fatiguing and painful duties ; but, although in common with all the garrison of Dresden, I owe him sincere thanks for the able services which he has rendered to our brave fellows in their hour of suffering, I was unconscious that I had incurred any personal obligation towards him.'

"I was about to utter an earnest disclaimer, when the sergeant, not giving me time to unclose my lips, exclaimed with a boldness which increased my embarrassment :—

" 'I ask your pardon, General ; but if I dared I would inquire if you know what is under the fifth button of my greatcoat ?'

" 'Of course I do,' replied the count ; 'I should be an ingrate were it otherwise. It is the scar of a musket

ball intended for me in the last engagement but one, where we fought side by side; and there is now weaving for you a yard of red ribbon, of which you will soon have the right to attach a portion two or three inches above it.'

" 'Once more I ask your pardon, General,' resumed the persevering Larive, sturdily; 'but if the ball you are good enough to remember had remained where that s—— Russian was impudent enough to lodge it, I should long since have been laid where I could not have turned aside another even from you. I only wish that I had had a chance of being a target in your place in that cursed sortie the other night; but such luck does not often fall to one man's share. Meanwhile, here is the gentleman who relieved me from the first, and saved my life. Now if, as you have sometimes said, I really saved yours at the time you mention, turn about is fair play; so if you will pay the debt you owe me to the doctor, we shall be quits; and as to the ribbon, if I am not knocked over before I am much older, I will earn that on some future occasion.'

"The count laughed. 'I quite understand your feeling, my brave fellow,' he replied; 'and your gratitude does you honor. What can I do for the doctor? I shall be well pleased to serve him for his own sake, as well as for yours; and if what he is come to ask is practicable, I pledge you my word that it shall be accorded.'

" 'Now, Papa,' said Larive, abruptly addressing me; 'you have heard what my General has said; and, as he has said it, it will be done, for he never yet broke his word. Speak out. I have no more right to interfere.'

"Considerably encouraged by the smile which still

lighted up the martial and somewhat stern countenance of the count, I ventured to inform him of what I had seen upon the bridge, and the danger to which I had been exposed by the violence of the detected spy. He listened earnestly, and the smile vanished.

“‘Tell me, sir,’ he said as I paused; ‘how it chanced that you did not warn me that there was some mystery connected with this wretched man, when you heard me make inquiries about him of my aide-de-camp?’

“‘Simply, General,’ I replied, ‘because I had never attached any idea of mystery to a poor wretch who I considered was heroically striving to support himself and his grandchild under one of the heaviest afflictions incident to humanity.’

“‘But when you heard the voices under the bridge, and knew that the troops were on their march to the very spot?’

“‘I was more astonished than alarmed, General; I did not connect them for an instant with the movements of the army.’

“‘But the signals, sir? Surely you could have prevented them from being exhibited to the enemy? You did not abstain from personal fear, of that I am convinced, for I have long ascertained that you are no coward. How then, I once more ask, came you to stand by, and suffer this monstrous act of treason to be perpetrated?’

“‘General,’ I said; ‘I was alone and unarmed; enfeebled by fatigue and want of rest; and, although these considerations would certainly not have deterred me had I for an instant imagined the use for which those signals were designed, still, you have seen the

man to whom I should have been opposed; and when you remember that he was desperate, and moreover in possession of the formidable weapon with which, as I have had the honor of informing you, he subsequently threatened my life, you may rest assured that the result of the struggle would not long have been doubtful; while it could only have involved me in a suspicion by which my memory would have been dishonored for ever.'

"'You are an able logician, sir;,' said the count thoughtfully; 'and your antecedents compel me to admit your reasons. But what of this young girl—who was aiding and abetting the villainy of her grandfather?'

"'Meta, General;,' I replied steadily; 'was the mere victim of the old man's tyranny, and shrank before his very look with terror. She is still too young, too timid, and too gentle to hate any one—even the enemies of her country.'

"The old smile again wandered over the hard features of the count. 'The picture you have drawn is a pleasant one;,' he said archly; 'and if I mistake not, the favor you have come to ask is to be permitted to continue your protection to this young, timid, and gentle victim?'

"'Not precisely, General; for such is my esteem for the poor friendless girl, that in coming myself to denounce her, I felt it due to my own sense of honor to share with her the consequences of my proceeding. Yesterday I made her my wife.'

"'Enough, M. Wolmar;,' said the count; 'your conduct towards your *protégée* has been admirable throughout. Never cease, sir, to obey the dictates of your

honor as you have hitherto done. You have proved yourself a faithful friend to the French nation, and we owe you some requital. From the commencement of the siege you have shrunk neither from labor nor privation; and I feel convinced that, however romantic this affection of yours may appear to me, you would never willingly have become the husband of a spy who was seeking to destroy us. I will undertake the management of this business; let your wife keep out of sight for a time, and she shall not be disturbed.'

"I bowed my thanks; I was too much overcome for speech.

"'And now a word with you, old comrade;' pursued the General, turning towards the sergeant, who moved a pace forward and saluted without the movement of a muscle; "I have done one act of justice, but that is no reason that another should remain undone. My dispatches will be forwarded to Paris by the next courier; and I trust that before many weeks are at an end, I shall have the satisfaction of seeing the cross for which I have applied, resting upon as brave a heart as ever beat within the breast of a French soldier.'

"Larive expressed his acknowledgments, not volubly, but with a certain sense of dignity which sat well upon the gallant veteran; and if he did terminate his assurances that he would live and die for his general with an oath that was more sonorous than courtly, it evidently did not excite the displeasure of the count, to whom such expletives from the lips of his favorite follower were probably by no means a novelty.

"Having at last recovered my voice, I endeavored in my turn to convince the General how deeply I was

impressed by his kindness ; and having received his renewed assurances that I need be under no anxiety whatever, either as regarded my wife or myself, I gratefully took my leave, followed by Larive, who, as I soon discovered, was a great deal more gratified by his promised decoration than he would suffer even his commander to imagine.

“ When we had reached the street I embraced the good sergeant fervently, declaring that I was the happiest being upon earth.

“ ‘ And I then ? ’ he exclaimed, grasping my hand as tightly as though it had been in a vice ; ‘ and I then, Papa ? I could not let *him* see how proud I was of my cross ; for he might think, should I help him a second time, that I was looking out for another recompense ; but I *am* proud of it ; and I have a right to be so. No offence to you, Papa, but every man can have a wife for asking, while every man cannot have a cross.’

“ ‘ True, my good friend ; ’ I replied, surprised by the deep emotion of the ordinarily phlegmatic veteran ; ‘ but you must forgive me if I remind you that you do not yet possess your well-earned decoration, while I am already in full possession of my wife ; so you must let me go home without further delay, that she may participate in my happiness.’

“ ‘ Go—go ; ’ exclaimed Larive, recovering his gaiety as suddenly as he had lost it ; ‘ Let our comrades laugh as they like, the boys of the battalion will not long be the only ones who call you Papa.’

“ I sprang away and left him.

“ The General kept his word ; in a few days no one mentioned the accomplices of the Russian spy ; and

when the city was evacuated I announced my marriage.

“Before the French troops marched out I had the gratification of seeing the red ribbon on the uniform-coat of my friend, the sergeant; while, as regards myself, if it will at all interest you to know the result of my adventure, I can only assure you that for the last eighteen years I have had no desire unsatisfied; and that the prophecy of Larive has been fulfilled to the letter.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GENERAL AND THE EMPEROR.

EVERYBODY knows that it was Barras who induced Josephine de Beauharnais to become the wife of General Bonaparte; and it is equally patent that she was only persuaded to do so by the stringent representations which he made to her of her comparative poverty, and the duty that she owed to her fatherless children. That wounded vanity tended in no slight degree to render her averse to receiving a husband at the hands of the man who had so recently professed himself her slave, there can be no doubt; but in all affairs of the heart Barras had constantly been eminently practical. He therefore attempted no display of sentiment when she reproached him with what she designated as his perfidy; and, with the ready tears for which she was celebrated, recalled to his mind the happy months of

their residence at the Château des Eguillades where, basking beneath a southern sun, in the midst of a magnificent landscape, and overlooking the sun-flashing waves of the blue Mediterranean, they had forgotten all save each other.

Those months were past and gone; that dream was over; and if the fair widow loved to recall it, the awakening of the statesman had delivered him altogether from the thrall; and thus it chanced that Barras, having given his heart for the time being into the keeping of Madame Tallien, was anxious to dispose of the hand of Madame de Beauharnais on the first favorable opportunity which might present itself; nor had he long to wait.

Some months before the return of Josephine from the neighborhood of Marseilles, and her establishment in Paris, General Bonaparte—after the affair of Ollioules where he was a simple lieutenant of artillery—had been promoted to the rank of captain (in which grade he served at the siege of Toulon), and subsequently invested with the command of the army in Holland; but had received a counter-order from Barras, with the appointment of Lieutenant-Commandant of the garrison of Paris; his courage, military skill, and strategy before the walls of Toulon having deeply impressed the latter, who felt that the moment had arrived in which the firm and unscrupulous ambition of such a man as Bonaparte was essential to the success of his own projects.

The manner in which the young adventurer served the interests of the Convention on the 5th of October, 1795, sufficed to convince Barras that he had been right in his conclusions. The Corsican exile had no

“compunctuous visitings of conscience” where he saw a prospect of furthering his own fortunes; and even as he had done at Ollioules so did he in the Rue St. Honoré, where his deadly battery commanded the church of St. Roch, the rallying point of the people; and where 12,000 men fell before his cannon.

Twelve thousand lives were sacrificed by the authority of a mere youth; but the Convention was saved; and Barras was thenceforward his avowed protector; while the first-fruits of that protection were his appointment as General of Division.

The Convention was saved; and Paris no longer required the presence or services of General Bonaparte; who had, moreover, during the struggle of the 5th of October, indulged in an independence of action, so undisguised, that it reduced his commanding officer to a mere cipher in the eyes of his own soldiers; and, happy as Barras had felt at the successful issue of the day, he was nevertheless conscious that his own position throughout the whole affair had been the reverse of dignified. He consequently found no difficulty in convincing himself that Bonaparte might serve the Republic more efficiently elsewhere than within the walls of Paris; and he had scarcely come to this conclusion, when he arrived at another equally luminous.

The young Corsican was a soldier of fortune, who had walked the streets of Paris for months without an aim or a hope—indebted to a college friend both for the coat he wore, and the bread with which he broke his fast—Madame de Beauharnais had been enabled, through the good offices of Tallien, to recover a portion of her late husband’s property; and could he only

induce Bonaparte to marry her—but we will not follow him in his deductions; let it suffice that after mature deliberation he spoke to his *protégé* upon the subject, who evinced as little inclination as Josephine herself to the marriage which was proposed to him. He had been presented to Madame de Beauharnais in the *salon* of Madame Tallien, where he was enabled to contrast her soft and indolent grace with the more striking, but less fascinating beauty of her magnificent friend, and that of all the loveliest women under the Directory, the fame of whose personal perfections has been handed down to us by the memoirs of the period; many of whom, having shared the captivity and sufferings of Josephine, now enjoyed in her society the safety for which they had paid so high a price.

The favor of Barras, coupled with the bold exploit of the Rue St. Honoré, had caused the name of Bonaparte to be familiar, and his presence to be coveted, by all which at that time constituted the fashionable world of Paris; nor was it long ere he became a constant guest in the modest drawing-room of Josephine; where he found temporary repose for his eager spirit in listening to her low musical voice, and watching the furtive glances of her downcast eyes; but that was all. No thought of her as a wife had ever crossed his mind. He was wedded to his ambition; and even while he admired, he remained heart-whole. There were, moreover, other circumstances which, to a proud and aspiring spirit like his, sufficed to keep his feelings within the boundaries of friendship and regard; and he started like a war-horse at the sound of the trumpet when Barras abruptly proposed that he should offer her his hand.

“I want no wife save this,” he said, as he struck the hilt of his sword; “and even were it otherwise”—

“Listen to me,” interposed his patron: “You are brave, but you are poor; and this widow of the Marquis de Beauharnais, although far from possessing the fortune to which, under other circumstances, she must have succeeded, is yet in a position to advance your fortune, and to secure your career. You are a foreigner and an exile; while she is highly connected, and has influential friends, who will not fail to exert all their energies to serve the man who may become her husband. You will do well to remember this.”

The young general remained silent.

“Hear what I have further to say,” pursued the commandant of Paris. “We are, as you know, preparing to send an army into Italy. Marry Madame de Beauharnais, and I will secure to you the command of that army; when it will be your own fault if you do not become one of the leading men of the Republic.”

A flush passed over the face of Bonaparte.

“Decide,” continued Barras, “as you think proper. With the wife I have proposed to you, I pledge myself that you shall be General-in-Chief of the forces of France beyond the Alps; decline the marriage, and I leave you to work out your own destiny.”

We all know the result of that conversation. The bribe was too tempting to be resisted; while Josephine proved no less yielding. Assailed on all sides by assurances that not only her own interests, but also those of her children, were involved in her compliance with the wishes of Barras, she finally consented to become the wife of Bonaparte, who, for a short time,

proved the most devoted of suitors, and the most uxorious of husbands.

The marriage was no sooner decided on than the republican General, asserting his privilege as an accepted lover, frequently accompanied his fair betrothed to the houses of their mutual friends; or sauntered with her along the stately terraces of the Tuileries, and amid the leafy shades of the Bois de Boulogne; while if the heart of Josephine remained for awhile untouched, her vanity was less passive; and as she listened to the glowing prophecies of the ardent young soldier upon whose arm she leant, she began to indulge in the same visions, and to glory in the same hopes. On one occasion she requested him to accompany her to the residence of M. Raguideau, an old lawyer in whom she had long been accustomed to confide, and to whom she was anxious to reveal the forthcoming change in her destiny.

On their arrival, they were informed by the clerks in the outer office that M. Raguideau was in his private room; and Josephine, withdrawing her hand from the arm of Bonaparte, begged him to await her there for a few minutes, while she had a private interview with her friend. As she disappeared, however, she neglected to close the door behind her, and from the chair upon which he seated himself, her intended husband was able to overhear, without losing a single word, the whole of their conversation.

“M. Raguideau,” commenced Madame de Beauharnais, “I have come to inform you of my approaching marriage.”

“Your marriage, Madame!” was the astonished reply; “and with whom?”

“A few days hence I shall be the wife of General Bonaparte.”

“What! The widow of one soldier, you are about to marry another. General Bonaparte, do you say? Ah, yes, I remember; the commandant of the army of the Interior; the young fellow who gave a lesson to General Cartaux at Toulon.”

“The same, M. Raguideau.”

“Pshaw, Madame! A soldier of fortune, who has his way to make.”

“He will make it, my good friend.”

“When, and how? But first, what is he worth at present?”

“Nothing, save his house in the rue Chantereine.”

“A shed—a— And so you are really going to marry this adventurer?”

“I am.”

“So much the worse for you, Madame.”

“And why?”

“Why? Because you had much better remain a widow than marry a paltry general, without either name or prospects. You must assuredly be mad! Will your Bonaparte ever be a Dumouriez, or a Pichegru? Will he ever be the equal of our great republican generals? I have a right to doubt it. Moreover, let me tell you that the profession of arms is worthless now; and I would much rather know that you were about to marry an army-contractor than any military man in France.”

“Every one to his taste, Monsieur;” said Josephine, stung by the contemptuous tone in which he had spoken: “you, it would appear, regard marriage merely as an affair of finance.”

“And you, Madame;” broke in the excited and angry old man; “you see in it only a matter of sentiment, and what you no doubt call love; is not that what you were about to say? Again I repeat, all the worse for you, Madame; all the worse for you. I had given you more credit for good sense than to suspect that you would allow yourself to be dazzled by a pair of gold epaulettes. Reflect before you make such a sacrifice; for rest assured that, if you are rash enough to persist in this foolish scheme, you will repent your folly all the days of your life. Who ever heard of a rational woman throwing herself away upon a man whose whole fortune consists in his sword and his great-coat!”

While listening to this extraordinary dialogue, Bonaparte, who began to fear that the comments and advice of Raguideau might militate against his marriage, was half suffocated with rage and impatience; he writhed upon his seat, and was a score of times on the point of showing himself, and desiring the officious lawyer to attend to his leases and lawsuits instead of interfering in matters with which he had no right to intermeddle. As he heard the words “sword and great-coat” so disdainfully uttered, he sprang from his chair, his eyes flashed, and, regardless of the gaze of the astonished clerks who were watching all his movements, he advanced towards the door beside which he had been sitting. Fortunately, however, the fear of exposing himself to ridicule restrained him; and he returned to his seat indignant at his own weakness.

A few minutes afterwards Josephine appeared, evidently ruffled and annoyed, and followed by the old

lawyer who accompanied her to the head of the stairs ; where Bonaparte, drawing the hand of his betrothed bride once more through his arm, made him a silent and contemptuous bow.

As they proceeded towards home, Madame de Beauharnais was conscious that Bonaparte had never before been so tender or so assiduous, but she did not open her lips upon the subject of her conference with her old and confidential friend ; while he on his side preserved the same silence ; nor was it until the day of the Coronation that either Josephine or Raguideau had the slightest suspicion that their conversation had been overheard by the very person whom it most interested.

Years went by ; the Italian campaigns and the Egyptian victories had aggrandized the "mere general ;" and then came the eighteenth Brumaire ; and subsequently Bonaparte, not satisfied with the Life-Consulate, dreamt of an Empire ; while the French nation, when called upon to express its opinion on this momentous question, replied by nearly four millions of written adhesions, not only to the Empire itself, but to the extraordinary man by whom it had been suggested.

The Emperor Napoleon was to be crowned ; and the Pope left the Holy City for Paris in order to perform the ceremony.

On the day of the Coronation, as he was about to proceed to the Archbishop's palace, Napoleon appeared to remember for the first time the existence of Raguideau ; and after having left his private apartments, as he was pacing up and down the throne-room, he suddenly paused in his walk, and summoning by a gesture

one of his chamberlains, he desired that M. Raguideau the lawyer might be immediately sent for.

When informed that the Emperor desired his attendance at the Tuileries, and *that*, moreover, on the very day of his Coronation, the man of business was lost in wonder, not being able to conjecture for an instant the motive of so abrupt a summons. When he had reached the palace and had traversed several apartments full of mirrors and gilding, and crowded with Marshals, Ministers of State, and Grand Officers of the Empire, he was ushered into a saloon where Napoleon was conversing with Josephine while awaiting him.

“Ah! Here you are at last, M. Raguideau;” said Napoleon half smiling; “I am very happy to see you.”
“Sire—”

“My good sir;” pursued the Emperor, without giving him time to reply; “do you remember a day in 1796 when I accompanied to your house Madame de Beauharnais, now *Empress* of the French?” and he emphasised the word *Empress* with all the depth of his finely-modulated voice; “Do you remember the eulogy which you uttered on the military profession? and the personal panegyric of which *I* was the object? Well! what say you now? Were you a true prophet? You declared that my fortune would always consist of my sword and my great-coat—that I should never make a name or a position like Dumouriez or Pichegru—and that Madame de Beauharnais was insane to sacrifice herself to a ‘mere general.’ I have made my way, nevertheless, as you perceive; and in despite of your sagacious predictions. Think you that the ‘army contractor’ would have bestowed a brighter boon upon his

wife after eight years of marriage, than a crown ; and that crown the Imperial diadem of France ?”

As he ceased speaking, Napoleon raised the hand of Josephine to his lips ; while she sat silent and motionless, bewildered by so unexpected a scene.

Stupefied by this deluge of questions, every one of which conveyed a covert rebuke, the unfortunate lawyer could only stammer out a few disjointed words ; his legs trembled under him ; his eyes were riveted upon the floor ; and the Emperor stood by, evidently enjoying his discomfiture. “ Sire, I could not foresee—Sire, did you really overhear—?”

“ Every word, M. Raguideau. You are aware that walls have ears, and I owe you a severe reprisal ; for if my excellent Josephine had listened to your advice it would have cost her a throne and me the best of wives. You are a great culprit, M. Raguideau.”

At the words “ reprisal ” and “ culprit,” the poor old man became more agitated than ever, the blood forsook his face, and he trembled in every limb : “ How could I tell?—How could I guess—?” he gasped out ; “ I thought only of her—of her fatherless children—I had loved them for years—I was anxious to see them once more restored to prosperity and happiness—”

“ I believe you ;” said the Emperor, touched by the emotion of the grey-headed confidant of his wife ; “ you could not tell—you could not guess—” and for a moment he paused, and remained absorbed in thought ; “ The future is beyond the grasp of any living man, so now we will return to the present ; and as I cannot altogether overlook the injury which you sought to inflict upon me, I condemn you to go this day to Notre

Dame and to witness the ceremony of my Coronation. Not in a corner—not behind a pillar, which will prevent my having ocular evidence of your obedience—but in the seat that I shall cause to be retained for you. Do you hear, sir? I must see you both in the cathedral, and in the line of the procession.”

Once more able to breathe freely, and endeavoring to express alike his gratitude and his joy, Raguideau bowed himself from the room, and hastened home to prepare himself for the august ceremony, at which he had been commanded to assist; while Napoleon, after having jested for a few minutes with his wife over the consternation of her far-sighted counsellor, entered his carriage in the court of the Tuileries, and proceeded to the Archbishopric. Ten o'clock was just striking from the clock of the palace, and a salute of artillery announced the departure of the Emperor; while, a quarter of an hour subsequently, a second salute gave notice of his arrival at the Archbishopric.

As he left the cathedral, Napoleon recognised the old lawyer in the crowd; and when their eyes met, he smiled graciously, and the smile was answered by so profound a bow that, as he afterwards laughingly declared to the Empress, he was for several seconds in doubt whether the prophet of 1796 would ever again be enabled to resume the perpendicular.

CHAPTER IX.

A SCENE IN THE LIFE OF CHARLES JOHN BERNADOTTE, KING
OF SWEDEN.

ON the assassination of Gustavus III., King of Sweden, the regency of the kingdom, in consequence of the extreme youth of his successor who had only just attained his fourteenth year, was confided to the brother of the late monarch, Charles, Duke of Sudermania, who ably fulfilled the duties of his somewhat onerous position until his nephew had attained his majority; when, withdrawing altogether from public affairs, he retired to his own estates, where he devoted himself to study and agriculture.

It was an evil day for Sweden on which he resigned the reins of government, and was replaced by the young sovereign, Gustavus Adolphus; whose reckless rule, combined with his hatred of the French Emperor, with whom he was unable to cope, involved the country in perpetual disasters; and who at length found himself despoiled of Finland by Russia, and of Stralsund and Rugen, by France; while, as if voluntarily to complicate his difficulties, he excited the indignation of his subjects by causelessly disbanding his body-guard, which was exclusively composed of the native nobility. Weary of the rule of a prince who sacrificed the inter-

ests of his people to his own senseless caprices, and who was unworthy of the throne he filled, the nation unanimously demanded of the great nobles that they should deliver them from the sway of a monarch incompetent to reign over a free people. A conspiracy was consequently formed against him; and on the 6th of June, 1809, he was compelled to abdicate.

Gustavus IV. had married the Princess Frederica-Dorothea-Wilhelmina of Baden, and was the father of two princes, who, by the popular voice, were excluded from the succession, while the crown was placed upon the head of the Duke of Sudermania, the late regent, subsequently known as Charles XIII. The new sovereign, being childless, was compelled by the nation to make choice of an heir, who, at the period of his adoption, was to be legitimated by the sanction of the States; and he accordingly selected Prince Christian Augustus of Holstein-Augustenburg, whose sudden death about a year subsequently still remains an unsolved historical problem.

It would perhaps have been more worthy of a great and generous nation, after this fatal event, to have recalled—not the dethroned monarch, who had proved himself unworthy of their confidence, but his eldest son, a high-hearted and noble young man, who would doubtless have retrieved all the errors of his father; but the Swedes had not yet either forgotten or forgiven those errors, and the States consequently decided that after the demise of Charles XIII. (one of whose first cares it had been on his accession to conclude a peace with France), the crown of Sweden should be bestowed upon an illustrious soldier, whose military renown was second only to that of Napoleon himself.

The recipient was worthy of the boon. Charles John Bernadotte, the son of a country attorney, born in an obscure town, and, apparently, to the humblest fortune, was one of nature's own nobility. He had already proved himself to be not merely a great captain, but also an able diplomatist: he was, in short, everything but a courtier; a fact to which he probably owed the facility with which he was permitted by his Imperial master to take possession of a throne.

Like all individuals elevated beyond their wildest expectations, the Corsican Emperor was greedy of adulation; while Bernadotte, aware how frequently circumstances form the man, felt within himself that consciousness of mental and moral equality with his military rival, which caused his head to remain erect when his back should have been bowed; and his voice to be heard, when he should, according to court etiquette, and above all to the etiquette of a court so recently formed that its *disjecta membra* had not yet effected the co-efficacy necessary to its dignity,—have remained silent.

The European powers, however, looked with considerable distrust upon a decision which placed the crown of such a kingdom as Sweden upon the brow of a simple citizen; but they were compelled to yield before the fiat of the States and people, who had unanimously declared in his favor; and Charles John had already won golden opinions from his future subjects, when an incident occurred which threatened to involve the country in far deeper mourning than the death of the Danish prince, his predecessor.

At the period of his enforced abdication, Gustavus

IV. had assumed the title of Count of Holstéin-Gottorp, and had gone to reside in Germany with his sons ; but, from some unexplained cause, his wife, the ex-queen Dorothea, had not accompanied him in his exile. She still remained in Sweden, where her presence tended greatly to embarrass the old king her uncle, without at all contributing to the embellishment of his court.

A recluse in her own palace she seldom appeared in public, even when her presence was exacted by the rules of etiquette ; and it was only on very rare occasions that she consented to receive visitors in the persons of such of the higher Swedish nobles and their wives as did not fear to incur the displeasure of the prince-royal ; while towards these she exhibited so much cold and haughty stateliness that they rarely intruded on her privacy.

Anxious to ameliorate the position of his niece, Charles XIII. urged her to forget the past, with all its blighted ambition and ruined hopes ; or at least to control her grief, and to receive the prince whom the will of a free people had called to the throne. For a time she refused to make such a concession, and declared that the usurper should never, so long as she had life to prevent it, penetrate beneath her roof ; but at length, although with great apparent reluctance, she yielded to the entreaties of the king ; and an invitation was issued to the whole of the court to attend a tea-party, which was, according to custom, to be preceded by play.

All the bidden guests, astonished by so great a novelty, accordingly assembled in the saloons of the queen, together with the foreign ambassadors and

nobles who chanced to be at that period residing in the capital. The king alone was absent from severe indisposition; and it had been his especial request that the entertainment should not be postponed. Nothing could be more gracious or more graceful than the reception accorded by the royal hostess to her distinguished guests, for whom the most brilliant preparations had been made; and as the crowd increased the card-tables were rapidly occupied, while the whist-party at the upper end of the state-saloon was composed of Dorothea herself, Charles John, and the ambassadors of England and Russia.

When tea was at length announced, that of Her Majesty and the Prince-royal was served apart, upon a magnificent salver of chased gold; upon which Dorothea, as if to do greater honor to her visitor, herself filled the two cups that had been prepared for them, and placing them upon a smaller salver near her, rose from her seat; and suddenly appearing to ignore her exalted rank, and the extent of such an act of condescension, presented it with her own hands to Bernadotte. Charles John, himself all trustfulness and chivalry, had already extended his hand to take possession of the cup which was nearest to him, bowing low as he did so in acknowledgment of the gracious courtesy of which he was the object, when he felt the pressure of a finger upon his shoulder. Instantly convinced that the touch had been too marked for the mere effect of accident, his presence of mind did not forsake him; but, possessing himself of the salver with an inclination still more profound than that by which it had been preceded, he turned it so adroitly as to

reverse the position of the cups without appearing conscious of the movement; and exclaimed earnestly:—

“Nay, Madame, I cannot permit Your Majesty to perform such a service for me. I were unworthy the name of a Frenchman should I commit so gross a violation, not only of gallantry, but also of the respect which I owe to your sex and rank. Rather suffer me to serve Your Majesty. You will not, I feel convinced, deny me so proud a gratification.”

The lips of Dorothea grew livid as she raised her eyes to his face, where they only met a calm and courteous smile; but ere long they fell beneath his clear and steady gaze. For a moment she hesitated—the dignity of the queen warred for an instant with the weakness of the woman—and then she raised the fatal cup with a steady hand, bowed to the prince with a smile as placid as his own, and drained its contents to the very dregs.

On the ensuing day the Stockholm Gazette contained the following brief announcement:—

“Queen Dorothea died suddenly during the night.”

Apoplexy universally assumes the responsibility of such deaths.

Thus much, as we know, is certain; that the wife of Gustavus IV. followed Prince Christian de Holstein-Augustenburg to the grave; and that Charles John Bernadotte lived to ascend the throne of Sweden.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTURE OF IVRÉE.

THE French army was preparing during the campaign of 1800 to meet the Austrian forces under the Archduke Charles in the plains of Italy; and was traversing with almost incredible difficulty and perseverance the stupendous line of the Alps which extends from St. Bernard to Nice and Monténotte; encountering hour by hour obstacles so formidable that neither the courage of the troops, the immense resources of the commissariat, nor the military genius of their leaders, were enabled entirely to overcome them.

Nothing daunted, however, by either suffering or fatigue, they toiled on, as if they already foresaw that the indomitable will of their General-in-Chief was destined to make them masters of Milan and Turin, to lead them to Genoa, and to dictate his own terms of peace to his haughty rival on the battle-field of Marengo.

Within a few leagues of Milan, in a hollow between two hills, and on the left bank of the Doria Balthea, they at length came upon the little town and fortress of Ivrée, which they scarcely anticipated would venture to dispute their passage even for an instant, its fortifications being almost nominal, and the nature of its position rendering it impossible that its garrison could sustain a regular siege.

They were, however, in error; courageous, wonderfully adroit, and fanatically patriotic, the inhabitants of the town, and the troops in the citadel, consisting only of four thousand men with twenty-five guns, held the place three entire days against an army of thirty thousand men, commanded by three of the youngest, but already three of the best, generals in Europe: Bernadotte, Masséna, and Lannes.

Furious to find himself arrested on his march before so insignificant an obstacle, Bonaparte—who had taken Alexandria in a day, and Cairo in an hour—and who was, moreover, anxious to possess himself of a position which would facilitate his operations on Milan, issued an order for the division under Lannes to make an attack upon the town, and to compel a surrender. A battalion of the 22nd demi-brigade, led by General Cochet, first escaladed the fortress, and carried it at the point of the bayonet; when the French no sooner found themselves in possession of the fifteen field-pieces which had defended the entrance than they turned them upon the town, and opened for their legions a perilous, but unobstructed path, along which they boldly advanced, singing the *Marseillaise*. After three hours of a struggle as heroic as it was hopeless, driven from the citadel, decimated in the streets of the town, shot down on all sides when beyond the reach of their enemies, or cut down by the sabres of those by whom they were overtaken in their flight, a few of the Austrian soldiers and the mere handful of inhabitants who had escaped the carnage, took refuge in the house of the Austrian Adjutant-General, resolved to hold out so long as one of them should be left alive.

In a few instants the residence of the brave veteran was transformed into an actual fortress: loop-holes were perforated in the walls, barricades were hastily erected, and every energy was exerted to accomplish an effective defence.

Cochet was the first to enter Ivrée, but he was closely followed by Lannes, who sent an officer and two battalions of the 22nd to force the position of the enemy. We refrain from naming this officer out of respect to his family, several of whose members have, since the event which we are about to record, filled with honor to themselves an elevated rank in the French army; let it suffice that Major L——, who was conspicuous in the Republican forces for his ferocity and headlong courage, penetrated, at the head of one of the battalions (by passing over the bodies of the forty gallant fellows by whom his entrance was opposed), into the house of the Austrian General. This dauntless man, after having seen all his little garrison fall and expire around him, had armed himself with a hatchet, which he wielded with superhuman energy against his advancing foes; and as Major L—— appeared at the door of the room where he had taken up his last post, he aimed so furious a blow at his head with the formidable weapon to which his hand had already become accustomed, that had not the wary officer adroitly struck it aside with his sword, it must have felled him to the earth. It was his closing effort, however; in the next instant he fell, and the apartment was invaded by the French soldiery.

Major L——, who had never during his fifteen years of military service given quarter to an enemy, was already advancing towards the veteran to complete his

work of blood, when a young and singularly beautiful woman rushed out of a neighboring chamber; and, falling at his feet, and clinging to his knees, pale, dishevelled, writhing, and almost insane, shrieked out in a voice of terror and despair, from which all the tenderness of the woman and the wife had disappeared:—

“Mercy! Mercy! Do not kill him. He is my husband, and the father of my child.”

The Republican officer looked down upon her without pity or emotion.

What had he to do with the agonies and the outcries of a woman? In a second he had thrust her violently from him; and taking one step forward, had fired his pistol at the head of the gray-haired veteran.

The discharge of the weapon was echoed by a cry wrung from the very soul of the unhappy wife.

“George, my child, where are you? Your mother calls you.—Come.”

At the well-known voice, a lovely boy, scarcely three years of age, who, as he saw his father fall, had concealed himself, pale and trembling, beneath that father's bed, approached his mother, and having reached her side buried his face in the folds of her dress, as if to shut out the frightful scene around him. But frenzied by despair, she plucked him from his new hiding-place; and leading him to Major L——, said in a tone as hard and emotionless as though it had proceeded from lips of stone:—

“Coward! Your work is not yet done. You have still his son to murder.”

At this moment loud acclamations were heard from without; and a French general, surrounded by a group

of officers, appeared upon the threshold of the blood-stained apartment.

Major L—— turned pale as their eyes met; but the young widow, as if suddenly inspired, rushed towards the new comer exclaiming:—

“Revenge *him*—revenge me—”

“Calm yourself, Madame,” said the general, in an accent so low and gentle that it thrilled to every heart; “I must understand what has taken place before I can pledge myself to anything. War is a fearful ordeal for a woman; and doubly so for one so young and helpless as yourself.”

He had scarcely ceased speaking, however, when a heavy frown gathered upon his brow, and a dark light shone in his eyes. All he saw revealed the truth at once; the major, with his pistol still grasped in his iron hand—the disfigured corpse, its white hairs dabbled in blood—the frantic woman, careless of all the conventionalities of her sex, though surrounded by a horde of ruthless soldiery—the child, pale but tearless, calling to his father to awake from the dreamless sleep from which there is no waking upon this earth.—After one rapid eagle-like glance, he understood all; and at once felt that there was room neither for doubt nor justification. His eye flashed as he crushed his glove in his clasped fingers, and turned abruptly towards the murderer, who stood before him trembling, stupefied, and stammering out a few incoherent words of explanation and excuse.

“You are a coward, Sir!” he exclaimed vehemently; “You have assassinated a wounded and defenceless man—a brave soldier—in the very presence of his wife,

who cried to you for mercy. It was the action of a felon!"

"General—" gasped the culprit, who felt that he was lost.

"Can you deny the charge that I have brought against you? Can you produce one witness to prove that I have accused you wrongfully? Oh! do it, Sir; do it; that I may be spared the shame of knowing that a murderer has for fifteen years been sheltered beneath the flag of France."

"General, I was ordered to perform my duty in face of the enemy, and I have performed it. He would have taken my life, and I have taken his. The game was an even one."

"Silence, Sir, silence;" was the stern reply; "A fallen foe should be as sacred as a friend: Face to face, and foot to foot, every loyal soldier should meet his foe; but to shoot down an unarmed man—to murder in cold blood one who is incapable of resistance—*Pah!* it is sickening. You are no longer worthy to serve the Republic; nor shall you do so another hour. Deliver to me upon the instant your sword, your epaulettes, and your decoration. From this moment you cease to belong to the 22nd demi-brigade: you cease to belong to the army of Italy."

The major looked up haughtily.

"General;" he exclaimed steadily, but with the concentrated emotion of one who was yielding up the better portion of his existence; "here are my cross and my sword. I now demand a court-martial."

"You shall have one, Sir; you shall have one; and no later than to-morrow;" was the rejoinder. Then,

turning towards the officers who had remained silent spectators of this exciting scene, the general approached the corpse of the Austrian veteran, and removing his hat, said solemnly: "Follow my example, Gentlemen; too much honor can never be paid to the fallen brave."

During the remainder of this frightful day the young widow continued a prey to the most agonizing despair. After having seen her husband laid in his grave with all the impressive ceremonies of a military funeral, the unfortunate woman, who had lost in one hour all that she had loved on earth except her child, fell into a perfect state of apathy; that apathy alike of soul and body which is not fatigue, which is not terror, which is not madness, but the utter apathy of despair. Not even the tears or caresses of her son, the idol of her maternal heart, could rouse her: she did not hear his voice, she did not feel his kisses upon her lips, she was unconscious that his loving arms were clasped about her neck; she breathed, but that was all; her inner life was extinct.

So long as she had a husband to avenge, a child to defend, she had retained strength and courage to speak and to act; but now that the assassin of her husband had undergone the disgrace of a public degradation, while the prompt and fearful retribution of a military tribunal threatened his life, she remembered only the immensity of her loss, the depth of her bereavement; and she was consequently more astonished than alarmed when, early on the following morning, a French aide-de-camp came to apprise her that the General-in-Chief desired an interview with her at the Town Hall, in which he had established his head-quarters.

Without the hesitation of a moment the newly-made widow took her child by the hand, who was pale and feeble from terror and want of rest; and then, lifting him in her arms, she followed the messenger with a firm step, but without having uttered a syllable.

Introduced at once into the council-chamber, she found herself in the midst of all the most celebrated generals of the French army—those men who were subsequently to fulfil such different destinies—who were to gain or to lose thrones; and to leave upon the field of battle, or in the intrigues of courts, or amid political conspiracies, some their honor, and others their heads. There were assembled Murat, Duroc, Lannes, Desaix, Mathieu, Dumas, Masséna, Hoché, Cochet, Bernadotte, and many others who were subsequently to become famous; while in their midst stood the General-in-Chief, his arms folded tightly across his breast, and his eyes bent upon the ground.

As the lady entered he looked towards her, advanced in silence, and led her to a seat; passed his hand with a melancholy smile over the fair curls of her boy, and then commenced a slow and measured walk from end to end of the apartment.

This sudden summons, this strange reception, and the deep silence which reigned around her, at first astonished, and finally alarmed the unhappy woman. A vague feeling of terror stole upon her; but she could not articulate one sentence to inquire of those with whom she had been so strangely brought into contact, what she had to fear, or what to hope.

Suddenly the roll of a muffled drum fell upon her ear—a discharge of musketry followed it—and the

report had no sooner died away than the General-in-Chief stood motionless for an instant; and then approaching her, took her hand, and led her to a window from which she looked down upon the melancholy close of a military execution.

“Shrink not, Madame,” he said, as with a natural horror she averted her head from the painful spectacle; “the dead man lying yonder was a French officer whom his countrymen and comrades have just shot, for having, in a town taken by assault, murdered an Austrian.”

He paused, cast a lightning glance over the group around him, and then added:—

“You are at perfect liberty to quit Ivree whenever you may wish to do so. To you the town must be full of bitter and cruel memories; nor is it at this moment a fitting place of residence for one so young, and—pardon me—so handsome as yourself. I shall place you under the escort and protection of General Desaix, who will answer for your safety to the Republic. Farewell, Madame; all I ask of you is to tell the Archduke Charles, on your arrival in his camp, what justice you have seen and experienced in the French army.”

“And the name of my preserver—of my avenger—that I and my child may remember him in our prayers?”

The stern soldier turned aside for a moment; and then, with studied and gracious courtesy, he said in a voice which was somewhat less steady than its wont:—

“I thank you, Madame; I may not ask those prayers from you for France; but still I gratefully accept them for Napoleon Bonaparte.”

CHAPTER XI.

AN EVENING WITH FOUCHÉ.

As early as the year 1814 the principal actors in the Revolution had so thoroughly divested themselves of the moral associations of '98, that they spoke of past events with an unscrupulous *abandon* peculiarly startling to younger and less experienced politicians; and, as though the Restoration had absolved them from all responsibility, or that a century had elapsed between the Consulate and the restored Monarchy, and swept from the world alike the actors and the witnesses of past events (while, in point of fact, many of both were still living), some of the leading celebrities of those troublous times related anecdotes, and revealed mysteries, which were assuredly never intended to become known beyond the walls of a justice-room, or the private office of a Police-Minister. Even Fouché himself, although far from conceiving that he had reached the close of his official career, was occasionally indiscreet enough to betray certain secrets which enabled him to display his graphic powers as a *raconteur*.

Here is one, told at the house of Cambacérès, where a small party were assembled; from a member of which we have derived it.

“On a certain day,” said Fouché, with that peculiar expression of eye and lip which rendered his counte-

nance so keen and fox-like that once seen he could never be forgotten ; “ I received a letter from a lady. There was no mistaking it ; the paper was fine, the form of the note elegant, and the perfume which it exhaled as I tore it open, at once subtle and delicate. I was urged—I was implored—in the most charmingly-rounded sentences, and with an earnestness which impressed me even more than the style of the request, not to go in person. No ; *that* the fair writer assured me she was not mad enough to hope for an instant—but to send as my representative some one in whom I could thoroughly confide, in order that she might communicate to me an affair of importance ; which she, however, felt herself bound to confess was totally unconnected with the interests of the Government.

“ The frankness of this avowal piqued my curiosity ; and, middle-aged official as I was, I confess that I was not proof against the sudden desire which I felt to investigate the mystery for myself. My only fear was that of being recognised, a risk which I was particularly anxious to avoid for many and obvious reasons. However, I had worn so many and such successful disguises in my time, that I thought I might venture to try my fortune once more ; so, after having maturely laid my plan, I determined to attempt it.

“ Having summoned a clever subordinate, who thoroughly understood his business (in the absence of my own valet, whom I had purposely dispatched to the other end of the city), with his assistance I dressed myself in a violet-colored coat, a purple velvet waistcoat, short breeches of black kerseymere, black silk stockings, shoes with silver buckles, a three-cornered hat,

and a gold-headed cane. A patch, cleverly applied, completed the disguise, which was so perfect that my faithful valet on his return from his errand (astonished to see a stranger, as he supposed, in my apartments), hurriedly and angrily inquired my business there.

“As I had succeeded in mystifying my lynx-eyed Jacques I felt satisfied that no stranger would recognise me; so, without any further misgiving, I got into a hackney-coach, and drove to the entrance of the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Victor, where I alighted, having previously taken the precaution to station several of my people in the immediate vicinity of the house, to which I then proceeded on foot. It was of very respectable appearance, with a carriage-entrance, an inner court surrounded by offices, a large hall, and a noble staircase. The name with which the note had been signed was one that I knew to have been borne by several high legal functionaries; and I understood at once that this was an ancestral mansion, where, if crimes had never been committed, they had at least been frequently and gravely discussed.

“I am not about to reveal that name; my story will have the same interest with one of my own adoption; and, therefore, it must suffice that on reaching the porter’s lodge, I inquired for Madame de Polvère.

“‘Do you want the young one or the dowager?’ asked the porter.

“I hesitated for an instant; but remembering the appearance and perfume of the note, I said boldly:—

“‘The young one.’

“‘On the first floor, Monsieur; the large centre door at the head of the stairs.’

“ ‘And which are the dowager’s apartments?’ I inquired, thinking it better to say something than to appear ill at ease, when the slightest suspicion might involve me in difficulty.

“ ‘On the ground-floor, opening on the garden, when she is in Paris; but at present she is at her place in the country.’

“ I bowed my acknowledgments for this important piece of information, and went up-stairs. Five minutes afterwards I was introduced into a drawing-room which had evidently undergone no change in its decorations since the year 1750. All was rich, but faded; and there was an air of by-gone magnificence about the aspect of everything that it contained which instantly produced its effect upon the mind. Through this saloon I proceeded to a second, less vast, but furnished in the same manner; and there, seated upon a sofa, I found a young, graceful, and timid woman, about twenty-five years of age, and of exceeding beauty. She was evidently in a state of painful agitation; she trembled violently; and I at once felt a desire to serve her.

“ ‘Madame la Baronne;’ said I, showing her the note which I had received; ‘I am sent by His Excellency the Minister—’

“ She clasped her hands imploringly, and I paused.

“ ‘Monsieur;’ she faltered out; ‘nothing short of the most absolute necessity could have induced me—I am indeed deeply indebted to His Excellency—I would prove my gratitude were it in my power—Oh, believe me,—I am very, very wretched!’

“ ‘Madame;’ I replied; ‘the Minister has great power. I am possessed of his entire confidence. He

will judge your cause according to my report; and, from what I have hitherto seen, I have no doubt that his verdict will be favorable to yourself.' ♦

"'But the step which I am taking is so serious—so onerous—so unprecedented'—gasped out the poor young woman; 'even now, while trembling for my life, I feel it difficult to convince myself that I have done right; but I am young, very young to die; and I have not sufficient courage to become the victim of another crime.'

"'A crime!' I exclaimed; 'a crime beneath this roof?'

"'Alas, Monsieur;' she sobbed out; 'your astonishment and incredulity have convinced me that I shall not be believed—forgive me for having troubled you with my sorrows, and forget me.'

"'Astonished I may have been, but, not incredulous;' I said soothingly; 'a man does not pass many years in the service of the Duke d'Otranto without becoming cognisant of deeper and darker deeds than your young and pure imagination can suggest. Moreover, I am here by your own invitation; and I have now a great duty to perform, for which I am responsible alike to my chief, and to my own conscience. Yours is equally stringent; and I call upon you, for your own sake as well as for mine, to tell me fully and without reserve all that, when you addressed His Excellency, you desired to communicate.'

"'I will do so;' she replied; 'I believe that I ought to do so. But oh! how earnestly do I hope that I am not suffering my coward fears to cause me to betray my duty! Yet I cannot die without a struggle, Mon-

sieur;—I cannot—so young, and so utterly alone—so full of life, and—'

“ ‘Not a word more, Madame;’ said I; ‘the time for hesitation is past. I have now heard at once too much and too little; and must, therefore, insist upon your confiding to me everything relating to this evidently serious secret.’

“ ‘I will obey you;’ said the Baronne de Polvère— ‘I will obey you, Monsieur; but only on condition that you will preserve the most inviolable secrecy, and not peril the honor of our family. Do you promise me this?’

“ ‘As Police-Minister;’ pursued the Duke d’Otranto with an ambiguous smile; “promises of this description were constantly forced upon me, which the public interest compelled me as a duty subsequently to disregard; while, on the other hand, they were serviceable in inducing a fuller and more detailed confidence on the part of those to whom they were made. My duty was to protect society rather than individuals; and where the breach of trust tended to the general good, I felt that I was justified in failing to redeem my pledge, and that I could do so without forfeiting my honor. Under these circumstances I did not scruple to assure the lady that she might rely on my discretion; upon which, wiping away her tears, and endeavoring to control her emotion, she proceeded to tell her tale as follows:—

“ ‘Being so thoroughly in the confidence of M. le Duc d’Otranto as you are, Monsieur, you must doubtless be aware that the family of my husband has long been celebrated in the higher ranks of the law. Some

centuries ago it was ennobled—*noblesse de robe*, as I need scarcely explain, and boasting nothing historical—but, despite this serious impediment to its importance, the mother of Monsieur de Polvère has conceived so exalted an idea of its dignity, that the dread of seeing the title become extinct has on three different occasions driven her to crime. I am grateful to say that she is not our countrywoman, but was born in one of the islands of the Greek Archipelago, where my father-in-law married her when he was serving in the navy, for which profession he had abandoned that of the law. My husband has a younger brother, who is at the present time a Captain of Artillery, and who united himself, five years ago, to a young and charming woman who died when she had been his wife about four years. I will explain to you the cause of her death.

“ ‘ My husband, before he was of age, married his cousin-german, to whom he was passionately attached, but who brought him no heir to his name ; and after four years of happiness, to which this circumstance had been the only drawback, she too languished and died. The coincidence was considered to be as extraordinary as it was melancholy, but no suspicion of foul play entered into the mind of any friend of the family ; and again the Baron de Polvère, whose grief at the loss of a wife whom he had idolized was still deep and sincere, suffered himself, at the earnest entreaty of his mother, to be dragged once more to the altar. The new baroness was an intimate friend of my own : she was beautiful, amiable, and affectionate, but the curse of barrenness was also upon *her* ; and the fourth year of her

marriage had barely expired, when she pined and died like her predecessor.

“ ‘ Nearly at the same period I lost my husband, to whom I had been united by the will of my family ; and who left me the mother of two children, who now constitute the happiness of my life.

“ ‘ Madame de Polvère no sooner saw the first year of my widowhood expire than she made overtures to me on behalf of her eldest son, from which I shrank from motives that will require no explanation ; but she persisted so resolutely, and I sympathised so sincerely in the grief of the baron, of whose amiable qualities I was well aware, and with whom I had contracted a close friendship during the lifetime of his last wife—we were constantly thrown together—we had a common sorrow—and we ultimately became so necessary to each other—that we finally suffered ourselves to be convinced by the old countess that our mutual happiness depended on our union. We were married, and for four years I have acquiesced in the truth of the assurance ; but if the affection of my husband has known no change, such has been by no means the case with that of his mother. To M. de Polvère I have been, in my turn, a childless wife ; and gradually, from a display of maternal tenderness on the part of the countess to which I found it difficult to make an adequate return, I have been subjected to the utmost harshness and indignity. Unconscious of having merited this treatment I appealed to my husband, but he was as ignorant as myself of the motive by which his mother was actuated ; and as no expostulation on his part could induce her to do me justice, I have hitherto

submitted in silence to a tyranny from which I found it impossible to escape.

“When Madame de Polvère, on her marriage, accompanied her husband to France, she brought with her as her personal attendant, a Greek woman who had been her nurse; and who was an object of hatred to all the household. Six months ago Panchiera, for such was her name, fell ill of a malignant fever; and not only the servants, but even her mistress herself abandoned her to her fate; and that so harshly that the vindictive invalid called down curses upon her head. For this excessive imprudence (knowing what I now know), it is impossible to account; I can only tell you facts as they occurred; save, indeed, that as the very moments of the woman’s life appeared to be numbered, it is probable that Madame de Polvère believed she was beyond the reach of her vengeance.

“You will readily understand, Monsieur;’ pursued the lady with a faint blush; ‘that, even loathing Panchiera as I did, I could not leave her alone in her dying agony; and the wretched sufferer, in her rare intervals of ease, expressed her gratitude so energetically that I soon ceased to remember anything save her lamentable state. The fact of my attendance on her waiting-woman soon, however, reached the ears of my mother-in-law, from whom I suddenly received an order to absent myself altogether from the sick-room; and as I was worn out with fatigue, I at once retired to my own apartment and threw myself upon my bed, where I fell into a deep and heavy sleep. It chanced that this took place on the birth-day of the countess, who having ascertained from my maid that I had gone to take some

rest, and carefully convinced herself by a visit to my chamber, that I was still quietly slumbering, and crushed by anxiety and exhaustion, determined to attend high mass at St. Etienne-du-Mont, whither she immediately proceeded, after having imperatively commanded that no one should, on any pretext whatever, intrude into the presence of the dying woman. Scarcely however, had her carriage driven from the door when Pauline awoke me with a request from Panchiera that I would go to her without losing a moment. Curious to learn the motive of such a message, I at once complied; and, in what afterwards proved to have been almost her death-agony, the miserable Greek woman poured out before me the long-hoarded secrets of her guilt-laden soul.

“ ‘Never, Monsieur; never shall I forget that frightful hour! The struggle of the strong will with the tortured and failing body—the gasping breath severing the frightful words of unexpiated crime—’ She paused, and with a shudder buried her face in her hands.

“ ‘It must, indeed, Madam, have been a severe trial:’ I said; ‘but compose yourself; it is past; and if you are only frank and explicit we shall no doubt be able to spare you such terrible suffering for the future.’

“ ‘She told me;’ pursued my companion, making a strong effort at composure; ‘that at a very early age my mother-in-law had been initiated into the fearful secret of composing certain poisons, of which she had availed herself to destroy the three childless wives of her two sons; and that I was destined to the same

fate if, by the close of another year, I had not again become a mother. I was incredulous, and did not hesitate to express my doubts; but Panchiera waved her hand impatiently, and bade me not waste the moments of her waning strength in a senseless opposition to the truth. She then informed me of the hidden place where I should find the fatal liquids and powders; and finally she gave me the receipt of an antidote which she assured me was infallible, and urging me to procure it at once, lest at a future period I might have no opportunity of doing so. She then solemnly took leave of me for ever, after having enjoined both myself and my maid to keep this, my last visit to her, a secret from her mistress.

“As no one save Pauline was aware that I had infringed the orders of the countess, it was easy to comply with her request; and, half frantic with horror and apprehension, I hastened back to my room to calm myself by prayer. I was still on my knees, seeking strength where alone it can be found, when Madame de Polvère returned, and at once hurried to the chamber of the Greek woman. It was evident that she was sinking fast; but when one of the attendants suggested that no time should be lost in summoning her confessor, the countess negatived the proposition, declaring that she had evidently rallied during her absence; nor did she dispatch a messenger for the priest until, as she rightly calculated, he had on his arrival no office to perform save that of praying beside the inanimate corpse, whose sins were already judged before another and a higher tribunal.

“Madame de Polvère did not even express a regret

at the death of her old attendant; a circumstance which astonished all the household save myself and my maid. A week went by, and I had exerted sufficient control over myself to evade all suspicion on the part of my mother-in-law; but I was, nevertheless, constantly in terror lest my life should be slowly passing from me; and the slightest symptom of languor or indisposition robbed me alike of energy and hope. In one of these paroxysms of despondency, I dispatched Pauline to the most celebrated chemist in Paris, and desired that the prescription given to me by Panchiera might be prepared and sent without loss of time.

“ ‘A few mornings subsequently, the countess came to my room before I had left my bed—this must have been about a fortnight ago—and I had no sooner half risen on my pillow to return her greeting, than I became aware that she was pale, agitated, and angry. She held in her hand a small box, carefully folded in green paper, and sealed. You see, Monsieur, that I am not sparing you a single detail.’

“ ‘And you are right, Madame la Baronne;’ said I, for my curiosity was strongly excited by so strange a revelation; ‘such precision frequently obviates the necessity of much after-explanation; and in serious cases like the present, facilitates the ends of justice.’

“ ‘Well, Monsieur;’ resumed Madame de Polvère, still totally ignorant, and even unsuspecting of my identity; ‘I no sooner saw the box to which I have alluded, than I became agitated in my turn; for I instantly apprehended that the antidote ordered by Pauline had by some unfortunate accident fallen into the hands of the countess. Concealing my alarm as

well as I could, however, I awaited in silence what was to follow: nor was I long kept in suspense.

“‘My dear child;’ said the old lady, in a kind, gentle, but slightly reproachful tone, like one who felt hurt and aggrieved by some unanticipated wrong; ‘I regret to say that I have reason to complain of you. How is it that after all the care and tenderness I have lavished upon you since you became the wife of my son—a tenderness which I blindly believed to be reciprocal—you were led to place faith in the vile slanders of a wretch who is now gone to her account? Had I not respected too deeply the purity of your mind, I should have confided to you years ago that Panchiera had been the evil genius of my life; that she had robbed me of the affections of my husband; and that she had embittered my existence by a thousand acts of ill-will and enmity. Perhaps I ought to have told you all this, but you will respect the motives of my silence; and, in any case, you should have been less credulous, and at once have informed me of the accusation brought against me. Had you done this you would have escaped a very painful ordeal, for I could without difficulty have convinced you of the injustice of your suspicions, and you need not have had recourse to a chemist to secure your safety.’

“‘I was careful not to interrupt the countess; on the contrary, I listened intently, in order to profit by any unguarded word which might escape her. That she was acting a part was sufficiently evident; and I became the more convinced of her guilt as I heard her plausibly, but most illogically, accuse the person by whom she felt herself to have been betrayed. The

envelope of the box was still unsealed in her hand, yet she was quite aware, from its form and size, of the nature of its contents. If innocent of the crimes with which she had been branded, how, I asked myself, had she so readily detected them? As she ceased speaking, however, I found it necessary to make an instant reply; and forcing a laugh against which my heart revolted, I said with a flippancy which must have been hideous on such an occasion, and at such a moment: Really, Madame la Comtesse, your fertile imagination has led you very far in pursuit of an extremely simple matter. As to the link between yourself and your attendant, I am of course not in a position to judge of either your wrongs, or her—

“‘Do not expect, Madame de Polvère,’ interposed my mother-in-law, sternly; ‘that I am to be deceived by so shallow an attempt at equivocation. This box, delivered to me in mistake, by a careless messenger who believed that he was giving it to the person for whom it was intended, contains an antidote which no species of poison can resist. Two persons only in France were aware of its existence; the vile woman by whom it was given to you, and myself; and now, by your imprudence, it will be known to all the world.

“‘Such a result reconciles me to what you designate as my imprudence;’ I said, forcing a yawn; ‘for is not the possession of such a secret a benefit to all mankind?’

“‘Perhaps so;’ was the hard reply; ‘but it was family property; which, in case of a reverse of fortune, might have proved a resource that you have recklessly and needlessly flung away; and I have a right to com-

plain of the liberty which you have taken in acting as you have seen fit to do without my consent?’

“‘How could I guess, Madame?’

“‘You knew that I was the mother of your husband; and you have degraded yourself by allowing the odious accusations of a menial to induce you to indulge in such suspicions against one whom you are bound to honor.’

“‘I retained my composure, and did not commit myself by a word. The countess expostulated, threatened, and argued, but I continued silent; until at length, exhausted by her excitement, she left me; but only to summon Pauline to her room, where she was subjected to a rigid cross-examination. She, poor girl, had less self-command than myself; and, since the frightful revelation of the Greek woman, had never swallowed a crust of bread or a draught of water without distrust, although her attachment to me was so sincere that I could not induce her to quit my service; or, as she herself expressed it, to leave me to my fate; and thus Madame de Polvère soon elicited from her trembling lips all that she desired to know. Terrified by the menaces of the countess, she equivocated, hesitated, and contradicted herself so perpetually, that at length the secret of my last visit to Panchiera was divulged; and my poor tortured Pauline, after having been abruptly dismissed by her tormentor, threw herself on her knees before me to implore my pardon for her involuntary fault.

“‘I consoled her as I best could, by the assurance that the fact of my knowledge of the existence of the antidote could have left little doubt on the mind of the

countess that I was cognisant of her crimes; and that henceforth it behoved us to be more on our guard than ever.

“ My husband, his brother, his father, and his uncle, are at the present moment all absent from Paris; and after the interview which I have related to you, my mother-in-law ceased to hold any communication with me, except in the presence of the servants or of some casual visitor, until a week ago, when she suddenly entered my apartment. As she closed the door behind her, she asked harshly :—

“ ‘ Well, Madame la Baronne, do you still look upon me as a murderer?’

“ I uttered an incoherent disclaimer.

“ ‘ Do not deny it;’ she said impetuously: ‘ I am already aware that you are less frank than your waiting-maid, from whom such dissimulation might be pardoned, while in you it is hateful. Enough of this. I will hear no more; and I command you instantly to tell me all you know, when I may perhaps be induced——’

“ ‘ To do what, Madame la Comtesse?’ I asked.

“ ‘ Do not urge me too far!’ she replied with a threatening gesture; ‘ I am no frivolous Frenchwoman. I have the honor of our house at heart; it is my existence—it is my world. Arrangements may be made to annul a marriage which is contrary to its interests.’

“ ‘ Madame;’ I exclaimed unguardedly; ‘ what an avowal has escaped you!’

“ ‘ And yourself!’ she retorted; ‘ are you not equally imprudent in admitting that you attach a meaning to my words, which you never could have attributed to

them had you not been previously taught how they might be interpreted ?

“ ‘ I was immediately conscious ; ’ pursued the poor young Baronne ; ‘ that I had committed myself beyond redemption ; I made no reply ; and my mother-in-law left me more irritated than ever. That same evening I went to the house of a friend, and on my return at midnight, I found Pauline awaiting me in the porter’s lodge. We were slowly ascending the stairs, when on reaching the *res-de-chaussée* we were astonished to see the door of the countess open, and she herself appear on the landing clothed only in her night-dress and slippers and carrying in her hand an unlighted candle. We were dumb with terror ; and, as she approached us, I was endeavoring to nerve myself for some scene of violence ; when to our amazement, she passed us without a symptom of recognition, although Pauline was standing beside me holding a lamp. We scarcely ventured to breathe as she walked up-stairs before us. Was she — could she be a somnambulist, I asked myself ? There appeared no doubt of the fact. Where was she going ? I made a gesture of caution to Pauline, and we followed her. She gained my apartments ; but without the pause of a moment, to my great relief, she continued her ascent ; and on reaching the second floor she opened a small door which admitted her by a narrower staircase to the rooms occupied by the servants. This she also mounted ; and still we followed with noiseless steps behind her, trembling from excitement and curiosity. At length she entered a passage which led to what had been the chamber of Panchiera, and applying a key to the lock, which we then remarked for the

first time that she carried, she threw open the door and went in. She walked steadily and stealthily across the floor to the upper end of the room, which was hung with old faded tapestry, a portion of which she raised—the dead woman had prepared me for what was to follow—she touched a secret spring, and as a panel slid back into the wall, we saw a small closet fitted with shelves, upon which were ranged numerous glass phials, some full, and others partially emptied of their contents. She carefully selected one of these; and holding it in front of the candle as though it had been burning, a ghastly smile passed over her lips as she muttered: ‘This will do. She cannot escape this.’ She then closed the panel, let fall the tapestry, and convinced herself that all was in order. Meanwhile we made our way noiselessly from the spot, and retreated to my apartments; where, as I threw myself half-wild upon a sofa in the ante-room, we heard her slow and heavy tread descend the stairs, until it stopped at last at the door of her own suite, when all was once more quiet.

“‘I should have told you, Monsieur;’ pursued the Baronne, pale with emotion; ‘that early that day the Comtesse Madame de Polvère had informed her servants that she should leave Paris early on the following morning for her château; and that the necessary arrangements had been made. She quitted the house at the hour she had appointed; and, contrary to my anticipations, without an effort to see me before her departure; but instead of a farewell visit, she had entrusted Pauline with a pressing and affectionate invitation for me to follow her, and try the effect of country air on my shattered nerves. Need I say that I at once

felt convinced of the destiny which was reserved for me should I become her guest? From that moment I have been almost insane with terror—I am anxious neither to compromise my husband's family nor to sacrifice my own life; and, well aware of the extraordinary talents of His Excellency the Minister of Police, I have at length resolved to entreat his assistance; as, should I disobey the wishes of Madame de Polvère, I shall be compelled to explain the motives of such a discourtesy, and my fate would be sealed. In pity then, Monsieur, plead my cause with the duke, for I know not where else to look for help.'

"You may believe, Messieurs;" continued Fouché; "how lively an interest I took in this strange tale, which had suddenly carried me back to the days of the Brinvilliers and the Voisins. The story had been told with so much simplicity, and such an utter absence of all attempt at stage-effect, that I was thoroughly convinced of its truth. I consoled the poor young victim of an insane vanity, and desired her to trust to me for her future safety; assuring her that the Minister would at once discover some means of saving both herself and the honor of the family. I then, in my turn, subjected her waiting-maid to a rigorous cross-examination, when I found every detail of her narrative in exact accordance with that of her mistress. I next desired her to conduct me to the room in which the Greek woman died, where she pointed out to me the hidden closet. I soon discovered the secret of the spring, drove back the panel, and convinced myself of the nature of the drugs which had been concealed there, and of which I instantly took possession.

“ ‘In eight-and-forty hours, Madame la Baronne;’ I said, as I made my parting bow; ‘all will be arranged to your perfect satisfaction and security.’

“ ‘On leaving the hôtel de Polvère, I drove to the Tuileries, and solicited an audience of the Emperor, to whom I communicated my morning’s adventure.

“ ‘Well;’ was his remark when I had brought my narrative to a conclusion; ‘let the wretched old woman be arrested, and put upon her trial.’

“ ‘Sire;’ I ventured to suggest; ‘such a course would involve the disgrace of the whole family.’

“ ‘I cannot conscientiously leave so monstrous a scheme of crime unpunished,’ said Napoleon.

“ ‘Most undoubtedly not;’ was my reply; ‘nor would I for an instant counsel Your Majesty to do so; but it appears to me that we could not have a more fitting opportunity for availing ourselves of one of the expedients of the *ancien régime*. Permit me, Sire, to arrest this modern Brinvilliers; and let her wear out the rest of her days in confinement.’

“ ‘I then explained to the Emperor the plan which had suggested itself to me on my way to the palace; and he had no sooner sanctioned its adoption than I dispatched a party of my police to seize the Countess in her château, which was easily effected, and by noon the next day she was safely lodged between four stone walls, under an accusation of conspiracy. Her husband and her sons came to me to implore my clemency; assuring me that I had been led into error, as my prisoner had never in her life taken the slightest interest in politics, or in anything beyond the welfare of her family. In reply I simply requested them to

accompany me to a private room; where, opening an iron chest the key of which I always carried about me, I displayed to their astonished eyes the deadly compounds that I had seized under her roof, all labelled in the well-known writing of their miserable relative. Heart-wrung and bewildered, they attempted to articulate a few incoherent acknowledgments for my consideration in concealing so fatal a secret from the world; and then took their leave. Facts are witnesses which nothing can contravene.

“The countess herself asked no question as to the cause of her incarceration; but a month or two subsequently, having, by some method of which I am ignorant, contrived to procure one of her favorite potions, she delivered herself from the shame and tedium of an existence which she was unable to endure; and passed out of the world with the reputation of a worthy woman, whose days had been abridged by unmerited persecution.

“So much for the romance of real life!” concluded the ex-Police-Minister, with a bitter laugh.

CHAPTER XII.

A COMPANY OF GRENADIERS.

ON the 24th of October, 1812, the first corps of the French army having received an order to evacuate Moscow, arrived at Maloïjaroslavetz in time to share

in the glorious engagement in which Prince Eugène, at the head of the 4th corps, proved victorious over the concentrated forces of the enemy. The battle was obstinate and bloody; and the little town was vigorously and gallantly contested on both sides, and was several times taken and retaken before the close of the day, when the French ultimately secured its possession.

Colonel Kobilinski, one of the aides-de-camp of Marshal Davoust, while galloping along the line to deliver an order, was struck by a cannon-shot, fell from his horse, and was supposed to have been killed; but as the marshal was riding slowly over the field, a man covered with blood suddenly raised himself upon his elbow in the midst of a heap of dead, and faintly exclaimed:—

“What! comrades, will you leave me here to perish without help?”

It was Colonel Kobilinski who, it was generally believed, should he have escaped with life, must have fallen into the hands of the enemy. A litter was hastily constructed by the men of the escort, and the sufferer was soon under the hands of a surgeon. His wound was, however, of so frightful a nature, that when it had been carefully examined the surgeon exchanged with Davoust a glance which betrayed that he had no hope of saving his patient. Nevertheless, by desire of the marshal, with whom the gallant young Pole was an especial favorite, it was resolved that his wounded leg should be amputated at the hip; but the agony of the operation proved so intense that Kobilinski having, as a last farewell, convulsively pressed the hand of his general, once more became unconscious.

On the following day an order arrived for Davoust immediately to quit the Kalouga road, and to fall back upon that of Wilna, from which point the retreat was to be effected; and the troops were already in the act of commencing their march, when an officer, whom the marshal had sent to inquire into the state of his aide-de-camp, returned with the information that, contrary to all the expectations of the surgeon, he still lived. Davoust, resolved that the unfortunate man should not be abandoned in his last hours to the vengeance of the Russians, was still unable to devise any means of transport which would secure his safety. The hospital wagons had been left in the rear; all the baggage was burnt; what was to be done? Suddenly a thought struck him; and halting a company of grenadiers who were at the moment defiling before him, he said impressively:—

“Soldiers! My aide-de-camp Colonel Kobilinski has had his thigh shattered by a ball. He is, as you all know, a Pole; and he must not be allowed to fall into the hands of the bitterest enemies of his country. He has served France well and bravely; and it is but fitting that Frenchmen should show how they can repay the debt. I confide him to the care of your company. It will be a service of danger; as, thus burthened, you will be unable to keep up with your comrades on a forced march; but I know that you will do your duty when I tell you to guard him as sacredly as you would guard your colors.”

A murmur of assent ran along the line. The grenadiers fell back in order that the troops by whom they had hitherto been followed might advance; and then,

having laid Kobilinski as commodiously as they were able to do upon his litter, they placed him in the centre of the company, and followed the retrograde movement of the army. With the tenderness of women rather than the roughness of war-beaten veterans, they bore the wounded man along; occasionally stopping to change his bearers, or to deprive themselves of some portion of their own clothing to protect him still more from the piercing cold.

Meanwhile the sufferer—grateful for the care of his zealous companions, exulting in the unhopèd-for kindness of his beloved commander, by whom, maimed and helpless as he was, he had been so generously cared for, and grateful to Providence on thus finding himself still surrounded by familiar and friendly faces—appeared, despite the anguish produced by the motion of the litter, to awaken to renewed hope; and at intervals he expressed his conviction that the skill of the French surgeons would not only cure his wound, but even enable him once more to take the field.

“I am young, comrades,” he said cheerfully; “and youth has a strong hold on life. Who knows? I may yet have a glorious career before me. I cannot surely die when my task is but just commenced.”

“True, Monsieur, true;” was on one of these occasions the sympathising reply; “our marshal cannot spare you yet. Only let us carry you safe to Wilna, and all will soon be right with you again. Why, here is Jacques Dufour who has more scars upon his body than he has teeth in his head; and yet if he chances to have a sick comrade he can eat his ration for him as well as his own. Take a pull, Monsieur, at the bottle

which the doctor said was to help you over the road, and keep up your heart. *Peste!* A man is never fairly gone until he cannot tell a Russ from a Frenchman."

Thus passed several days of the toilsome and weary march of the gallant little band, but soon the sense of solitude in that desert and snow-covered wilderness began to depress the stoutest spirits; nor was this the only moral evil against which they had to contend, as they gradually became conscious that the retreat which had commenced in so orderly and hopeful a manner had, under the incessant intensity of the cold, degenerated into a disorganised and despairing march. Arms, military equipments, and dead horses were scattered at intervals along the road; but still the grenadiers pressed forward, seeking to conceal from their wounded charge the terrible evidences of ruin about them.

Nor were they even permitted to struggle on in peace; for in a few hours after they had reached these landmarks of misery they were on several occasions attacked by bands of Cossacks, who bore down upon them with wild and savage yells; when, closing round the litter, they either fought their way through their blood-thirsty opponents, or stood firmly to repel their attack. Calm, silent, and resolute; full of the enthusiasm of a great duty still unaccomplished; worn and weary as they were, they scorned to yield an inch. Monuments of marble have ere now been erected in memory of deeds of heroism which must have yielded precedence to theirs; and yet the sublime devotion of this little band might, ought, and would, have passed unregistered, like many another glorious episode in the

great drama of War, had none been spared to bear witness to its existence.

Abandoned to themselves in an enemy's country ; their limbs benumbed with cold ; the very words frozen in their throats ; insufficiently clothed ; scantily fed ; and delayed upon their toilsome march by their helpless burthen, one recollection sufficed to sustain them ; a Marshal of France had said :—" I confide Kobilinski to your honor ; you will restore him to me ;" and they must not let him find his trust in them misplaced. Then military discipline became indeed the germ whence glory sprang up in the long-enduring spirits of these devoted men. There was no one by to witness and to applaud their struggles, save the wandering hordes by whom they were from time to time harassed, and almost overpowered ; and when, at the close of their third week of suffering and agony, the young Pole entreated them with clasped hands to leave him to die alone, and to make an effort to save their own lives, a resolute refusal met him on all sides.

" But, comrades ;" he urged in an impassioned voice, which gained strength from the intensity of his emotion ; " I feel that I am sinking fast ; that for me all hope is over ; and that you are generously sacrificing yourselves for one who ere long will be unable even to express his gratitude."

" Perhaps so, perhaps not, Monsieur ;" growled out Jacques Dufour, dashing the icicles from his moustache ; " but in any case you may make up your mind that, dead or alive, we shall take you into Wilna, and deliver you to our marshal ; so cover your head with your cloak, and leave us to do our duty."

“But, my good Jacques——”

“Not a word more, Monsieur; we know nothing about Colonel Kobilinski, aide-de-camp to Marshal Davoust here; we have received our orders, and shall obey them. You are to us only a wounded man on your way to the hospital at head-quarters.”

A few days subsequently, the noble fellow who had thus spoken awoke from the deep sleep of exhaustion into which the whole party had fallen at the close of several hours of intense toil, only to find that when he sought to arouse his comrades in order that they might resume their march, but four answered to his summons. The rest were at peace!

The five survivors gazed at each other stupified with horror, and then they glanced at the Pole. He was motionless, but he still breathed; and regardless that by such a precaution they doubled their own labor, they threw over him several of the great-coats of their dead comrades, lifted the litter, and slowly and in silence once more moved forward.

On—and on; throughout the long, long day; no one to share and to lighten their toil; they were but five; there was no relay of labor; it was one determined strain of nerve and will; and lo! towards evening, in the far distance they traced along the murky atmosphere a line of houses. It was Wilna! It was the promised land! It was the haven of temporary security and rest.

A simultaneous cry of triumph burst from the lips of the five exulting men; and in the next instant they were talking of hope and comfort to the rapidly-sinking Kobilinski. Vain vision of accomplished duty! The

revulsion of feeling was too violent for the weakened frames of these military martyrs; two fell and died ere they had reached the faubourgs of the city; two others tottered on a few paces further—and then one—one only—the veteran Jacques Dufour—was left to dispute with the elements the numbed and motionless body in the litter. For a moment he stood aghast; then conscious of his utter inability to lift it, he clutched his fingers fiercely into the canvass by which it was covered, and dragging it after him, by a last effort of strength rushed on until his culminating shriek of agony reached the ear of the nearest sentinel.

In a few minutes he was surrounded by his comrades; and temporarily invigorated by his triumph and the slight refreshment afforded by their canteens, he was enabled to superintend the removal of Kobilinski to the dilapidated house in which Marshal Davoust had established his head-quarters; when having ascertained that medical attendance had been summoned, and assured himself that his precious charge was once more carefully laid upon a comfortable bed, he sent to inform the marshal that the grenadier company to whom he had entrusted his aide-de-camp, having fulfilled his orders, requested the honor of an interview.

This was instantly conceded.

“Where is Colonel Kobilinski?” asked Davoust.

“He is here, Monsieur le Maréchal.”

“And the Company?”

“Present, mon Maréchal.”

“I ask for the Company.”

“I have answered: Present.”

“But your comrades?”

“Ha!—my comrades—Buried, Monsieur le Maréchal—in the snow!”

Davoust could not utter a word, but he opened his arms, and Jacques Dufour flung himself into them.

He was pressed to the heart of a Marshal of France—he was repaid, amply repaid, he thought, for weeks of cruel and almost unparalleled suffering; but, ere the eyes of Kobilinski closed for ever, they rested upon a red ribbon proudly displayed on the breast of Jacques Dufour.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SECRET MISSION.

THE hereditary Prince of Parma, Infant of Spain, and subsequently (in 1801) created King of Etruria by the First Consul, died on the 27th of May, 1808, leaving a son and a daughter; the former of whom, Charles Louis II., was proclaimed on the day of his father's death.

In a previous sketch we have given a portrait of the young and royal widow; and we are now about to relate an anecdote, communicated to us by the principal actor in a singular episode in the life of the Emperor with which she was connected.

“There existed, tossing about the world,” said the Marquis d'A——, “a certain Chevalier de Cornn, an ex-page of Louis XVI., who was, if I do not mistake, a native of Rouergue. He was a Knight of Malta, an

officer of cavalry, and a man of very ancient and noble family. Like most of the nobles who emigrated, he had wandered from country to country, and had had a host of adventures. He was, in every sense of the word, what the softer sex at that period called a pretty fellow; almost uneducated, not overburthened with intellect, but exceedingly good-looking: with a fine figure, a handsome face, and a facility of expression which with many passed for wit, and with all served to veil the real vices of his character. Gay, graceful, and self-confident, the Chevalier de Cornn had succeeded in gaining the affections of the niece of the Bishop of Bristol, a prelate celebrated throughout the continent for his lavish expenditure, his avarice—strange anomaly, yet not more strange than true—and his *liaisons* with the Countess de Lichtenau, the mistress of Frederic William King of Prussia, and with the wife of Sir William Hamilton.

“For some months the Bishop refused his sanction to the marriage, looking upon the Chevalier as a mere adventurer; but the tears and entreaties of his young relative at length prevailed, and M. de Cornn became her husband, all heretic as she was, without renouncing the cross of Malta.

“The interest of the prelate obtained for his nephew the rank of colonel, and subsequently that of lieutenant-general in the army of Etruria; nor was it long before de Cornn secured to himself the good graces of the widowed queen.

“What I am about to relate to you occurred when I was one of the chamberlains of the Emperor, whom I had accompanied to Milan. In the course of the even-

ning which preceded the Coronation, my servant delivered to me a note, which ran thus:—

“ ‘A traveller and an emigrant, half French half Tuscan, an old friend of yours, who still feels a great regard for you, has just arrived in this city from Florence. He wishes to have some conversation with you in private; if a secret of the greatest importance does not appear to you a burden too heavy to bear, on a subject too serious to be confided to paper.

“ ‘Reply at once; I shall await you at my hotel.

“ ‘THE CHEVALIER DE CORNN.’

“ Curious to know what a man of whom I had lost sight since 1789, could have to communicate to me of so mysterious a nature, I returned a verbal reply to the effect that I was always happy to meet an old friend; and ten minutes after my hand was grasped in that of de Cornn.

“ He was still a noble-looking man, but the inroads of dissipation were plainly visible in his appearance.

“ ‘Well!’ he exclaimed; ‘I am glad to see that fortune has not played you false, for she is but a sorry jade who will not always answer to the spur.’

“ ‘You appear to me to have as little cause of complaint as myself,’ was my rejoinder.

“ ‘Pshaw!’ said the Chevalier curling his lip; ‘you are the satellite of a sun, while I only follow in the wake of a star. But perhaps;’ he added sententiously; ‘it only depends upon yourself to elevate that star to the height of your superior luminary.’

“ ‘Which doubtless means;’ I replied; ‘that you

would have no objection to see our Emperor the husband of your Queen.'

"'I do not deny it,' assented de Cornn. 'It would not be an undesirable marriage for either party. Napoleon could not unite himself to a woman of higher race nor of more amiable disposition than Marie Louise of Spain; while on her side, she can desire no more fitting husband than the great Napoleon. She is young; barely twenty-three years of age; and already the mother of two children. Will you undertake to negotiate this affair?'

"'If I consider it practicable;' I said hesitatingly; 'I see no particular reason why I should not do so; but the Beauharnais family would naturally oppose it—and as to Josephine—it would be her death. Moreover, the Emperor is stringent upon one point; and I shall not conceal from you that certain unpleasant reports have reached our court—'

"'Lies, one and all!' thundered out the Chevalier.

"'So far, so good;' was my tranquil rejoinder; 'but have the kindness to tell me who will answer for *you*? Do not be offended, my dear de Cornn, but I must tell you frankly that for such a mission—'

"'I have my passports—I have my credentials—I have my instructions—' again broke in my excitable companion. 'In fact, I am at liberty either to act secretly, or publicly to declare my official character.'

"'I only wish that you had the power to establish your private one,' said I with a smile.

"'Come, come; a truce to joking,' impatiently exclaimed the Chevalier; 'I believed when I selected you as the agent in this affair that I was doing you an

essential service ; but should you think otherwise, I know that you will keep my secret, and I shall find more than one who will be glad to profit by your refusal.'

"As I had no difficulty in perceiving that my knight-errant was seriously piqued I resumed my gravity, and promised that I would give my best attention to all that he might desire to communicate to me ; upon which he stated that the Queen of Etruria had summoned him to a private audience ; and, after having pledged him to secrecy, had said with considerable emotion :—

"'I am a widow ; my life is a perpetual struggle ; and I cannot enforce obedience. I admire the Emperor, and look upon him as the model of European sovereigns. I would willingly become his wife ; nor do I see why he should reject my hand. By marrying me he would ally himself to nearly all the royal families of the Continent ; and, should we have no other children, my son, when adopted by him, would be readily recognised, and even welcomed by the foreign governments.'

"There was considerable truth in this argument ; and, after some reflection, I resolved to run the risk, and to open the negotiation. I was extremely annoyed, however, at the high tone assumed by a nobody like the Chevalier de Cornn ; he was so unequal to the difficulties and niceties of his position ; he was so deficient in tact and delicacy ; while, superadded to these objections, I was well aware of the aversion of the Emperor for all intermeddling by a Frenchman in the interest of a foreign power.

“This I communicated frankly to my companion, who replied with equal sincerity that the queen having honored him by so unequivocal a proof of confidence, he should exert all his energies to convince her that it had not been misplaced ; and that, moreover, Napoleon must be well aware that he should act throughout the affair in the manner which might be most agreeable to His Imperial Majesty. Having received this assurance, I promised him that I would endeavor that very evening to obtain an audience of the Emperor at his *coucher*, and that I would lose no time in apprising him of the result of the interview.

“I then returned to the palace, and put on my court-dress. There was to be a state reception, at which, however, I despaired of finding an opportunity of attracting the attention of Napoleon ; and I racked my brains painfully to devise some method of making my request, even while I could not altogether overcome my uneasiness at the conviction that should Josephine herself, or any of her relatives, entertain a suspicion of the intrigue to which I was about to become a party, and it should fail, my favor would be at an end for ever.

“It was consequently with anything rather than a festive feeling that I found myself in the midst of the courtly crowd which thronged the saloons of my Imperial master ; nor was it long before I had reason to be convinced that my countenance had betrayed me ; for as Napoleon’s eagle eye turned on me for an instant, he at once discovered that I was not at my ease. In a few minutes he passed close beside me, and as he did so he looked keenly at me, and asked rapidly :—

“‘What is the matter? Do you want to tell me anything?’

“‘An audience, Sire,’ I replied in the same brief manner; ‘and as soon as possible.’

“‘Follow me,’ was the reply.

“I began to tremble at my own imprudence as I saw the decisive moment approach. A great number of the Italian nobility of both sexes, Frenchmen, Germans, and in fact foreigners from every country in Europe, all individuals of high rank, and superbly dressed, were assembled in the spacious and magnificent reception-rooms; but all eyes were fastened upon a single figure, that of Napoleon, as he made his circuit, surrounded by the great officers of his household.

“I followed him at a distance, as he turned first to the right and then to the left, conversing with his guests; and I had an excellent opportunity of remarking that he lingered the longest beside those who were conspicuous from their talents and personal qualities; and, perhaps somewhat ostentatiously, gave little of his notice to those who had nothing to distinguish them beyond their rank. Thus he discoursed freely, and with evident interest, with Melzi (afterwards Duke of Lodi), Dandolo Cicognario, Marescalchi, Aldini, Sommariva, and others of the same stamp; and even still longer with Prince Appioni, and the Marquis Cugnola, the celebrated architect.

“Finally he reached an open window, and stepped out upon the balcony, motioning me to follow; when instantly all the courtiers receded a few paces, aware that their close attendance was no longer desired.

“ ‘Well, Marquis?’ he exclaimed in an eager but suppressed voice as I stood beside him.

“ ‘It is a peculiar affair, Sire ;’ I said, ‘ involving no danger either to Your Majesty or to the Empire, but nevertheless important, and requiring your attention.’

“ ‘ In that case remain where you are until I send for you ;’ was his reply ; ‘ and then follow the person who will say : “ We shall have a fine day to-morrow ;” ’ answering him by some sentence into which you introduce the word *Italy*.’

“ ‘Sire :’ I said hurriedly ; ‘ do not let that person, whoever he may be, belong to the household of the Empress.’

“ I cannot describe to you the expression of surprise which flitted over his countenance ; it was, however, as brief as a lightning-flash, and without uttering another word he moved away.

“ As I returned to the circle I found that I had suddenly become an object, not only of intense interest, but almost of affection. A score of my acquaintance who had simply greeted me by a nod when I first entered the room, now flocked about me ; several among them pressed my hand ; and all were dying to ask : ‘ What was the Emperor saying to you ?’ although all were too accomplished courtiers to venture such a question. I received these implied congratulations as they deserved : returned smile for smile, and compliment for compliment ; and when I at length succeeded in escaping from the friendly importunities of my impromptu admirers, I wended my way towards a bevy of ladies, who received me with such exaggerated graciousness that I nearly lost patience, aware that I was

indebted for this unwonted attention to the presumed confidence and favor of the Emperor.

“When he re-entered the saloon, Napoleon addressed himself with marked courtesy to Prince Néri Corsini and the Chevalier Fossombroni, the two ambassadors of the Queen of Etruria, who had been sent to Milan to assist at his Coronation; and I felt inclined to laugh as I remembered what a sorry figure the said diplomatists would soon present, when, while they were entrusted with nothing but empty compliments, a hare-brained Frenchman, without talent and without position, would perhaps be negotiating the marriage of their sovereign with the very potentate at whose court they were parading their importance; utterly ignorant of the momentous affair, which must, should it be brought to a favorable issue, revolutionise their country.

“I took little pleasure in what was going on about me, although I had never witnessed a more brilliant spectacle. Anxious and unnerved, I was unable to enter into the frivolous conversation, and equally frivolous amusements of the unthinking crowd who were absorbed by anticipations of the morrow’s ceremony; and I was consequently rejoiced when at midnight the Emperor and Empress withdrew to their private apartments, and the guests gradually disappeared.

“I passed nearly an hour in the deserted saloon in which Napoleon had desired me to await his summons; and more than once during that interval M. de Cornn would have found cause for a duel could he have read my thoughts, and known the fate to which I devoted him. Nor could I altogether absolve myself. Josephine had ever been to me an indulgent mistress, had

treated me with confidence, and had served me whenever it was in her power to do so. And how was I about to requite her kindness? By wounding her in the tenderest point—by opposing to her a rival of royal-blood—and by estranging from her (should my mission prove successful), the affections of her husband—waning affections already, it is true; but of that fact the world knew nothing, nor would she confess it even to her own heart.

“My reflections were far from pleasant, and I was consequently by no means sorry when, as the time-piece pointed to a few minutes before one, the Count de Beausset, the prefect of the palace, sauntered into the saloon, and smothering a yawn, exclaimed in apparent surprise, as he approached me:—

“‘Ha! Marquis, what, are you still here?’

“‘As you see, Count.’

“‘*Pardi!* You must be made of iron to remain out of your bed so late when you remember what you will have to go through some hours hence. All I trust is;’ he added with marked emphasis; ‘that *we shall have a fine day to-morrow.*’

“‘I echo the hope, particularly for Italy;’ I replied, with equally marked intonation; ‘as it will open for her a brilliant and happy future.’

“De Beausset smiled, and motioned me with his hand to follow him. We passed through several rooms which I had never previously entered, and finally we reached the door of the Emperor’s private closet, before which Roustan was standing guard. He exchanged a password with the count, and then raising the tapestry which veiled the entrance he drew

back, and I found myself in the presence of Napoleon.

“‘Now for your news, Marquis;’ said His Majesty, scarcely allowing me time to perform my salutation. ‘When I first caught a glimpse of you to-night, I believed that you had just been initiated into the secret of some serious conspiracy; but from your last words I have since been inclined to believe that, grave and agitated as you were, you are merely an emissary of Hymen. You have a marriage to propose to me, if I mistake not.’

“As I discovered that I had been imprudent enough to betray my secret so easily, I felt ready to sink. How poor an opinion must this extraordinary man have formed of my self-command; and how improbable it was that henceforward he would ever honor me with his confidence.

“‘Answer me, Monsieur; am I right or wrong?’ he continued, before I had recovered sufficient composure to reply to his first address.

“‘Sire,’ I said with some trepidation; ‘my position is an invidious one; the duty which I owe to Your Majesty on the one hand; and the respectful attachment which I feel for the Empress on the other—’

“‘Duty first, Monsieur,’ broke in the Emperor impatiently; ‘duty-before all other considerations.’

“‘So shall it be, since such is the will of Your Majesty;’ I replied, with a profound bow; and I forthwith informed him, without omitting a single detail, of all that had passed between the Chevalier de Cornn and myself; concluding my recital by communicating to him what I knew of the extraordinary individual, to

whom the Queen of Etruria had entrusted so delicate a mission.

“Napoleon mused for a moment, and then looking fixedly and somewhat sadly towards me, he said slowly:—

“‘Monsieur le Marquis, it is always a melancholy circumstance when political interests are at variance with family affections. I cannot look into the future, nor foretell what sacrifice the welfare of France may one day exact from me. I will not permit any one, be it whom it may, to anticipate my views or my purposes. I have no intention of severing the bond which unites me to the Empress; and it gives me pleasure to be convinced of your devotion to her person. I nevertheless thank you for your confidence. I should and will know everything. Under other circumstances I might have been inclined to weigh the advantages of an alliance with the royal family of Spain; but in no case—plebeian as many of the highest nobles in the Empire might esteem such a resolution—would I consent to become the husband of any woman who was not pure alike in heart and mind; and, consequently, I could not accept the hand of the Queen of Etruria. You understand, Monsieur, that I say this merely supposing that I had the project of annulling my present marriage; but the sole motive of my refusal in this case, is to be formally attributed entirely to my attachment to the Empress, to whom I am indebted for ten years of happiness. You must not mistake me, M. le Marquis; *that*, you understand, is the sole motive of my refusal.’

“Encouraged by the confidential tone of the Emperor,

I ventured respectfully to suggest that if one of his brothers—

“‘No, sir,’ he interrupted abruptly; ‘Joseph and Louis are both married to my entire satisfaction—as for Lucien, I have nothing to say—while I have other views for Jérôme. Moreover, an alliance with the house of Bourbon would provoke the comments of the English, and perhaps involve me some time hence in difficulties. Besides the Queen of Etruria has a son—would you ask me to see my children wait for a crown until hers died or abdicated?’

“Then suddenly changing the subject, he asked me:—

“‘Is this Chevalier de Cornn noble?’

“‘Sire,’ I replied; ‘he is the descendant of an ancient and noble family of Rouerque; a Knight of Malta, and was formerly page to Louis XVI. He is now in the service of Etruria, and is the husband of the Bishop of Bristol’s niece.’

“‘I understand;’ said the Emperor, with a scornful smile; ‘he is one of those adventurers who only achieve importance out of their own country. Could not the Queen of Etruria—a Bourbon—have found something better than that to intrust with such a mission?’

“‘He is a man of honor, Your Majesty;’ I ventured to reply, stung by the contempt that he evinced for the individual with whom I had so inconsiderately involved myself in an affair which, with common prudence, I should have avoided altogether; ‘but he is an emigrant, who, in his recklessness, has contracted an absurd and unpatriotic marriage.’

“‘And who is not yet weary of endeavoring to per-

petrate the same folly ;' said Napoleon, still in the withering accent of sarcasm ; ' can it be possible that crowned heads can employ such agents ? Surely they must select these men, dropped from the clouds, in order that they may be at liberty to recognise or ignore them, as circumstances may render most convenient. Such is not my system. However, I will see this Knight of Malta. Bring him to the palace before seven o'clock to-morrow morning ; and now go to your bed.'

" I have given only the broad outline of this conversation, which lasted at least an hour ; and it was consequently past two in the morning when I left the palace to apprise the chevalier that Napoleon would grant him an audience.

" I did not wait to change my dress, but proceeded at once to the hotel, where I found the ex-page of Louis XVI. in a sound sleep. My apparition in full dress, as I descended from one of the Imperial carriages, attended by footmen in the Emperor's livery, and lighted by the four flambeaux which, according to court etiquette, always accompanied the equipages of His Majesty, electrified the whole household, which was in a few seconds a scene of inextricable confusion.

" The landlord, hoping that I had come to establish myself under his roof, conducted me with many bows and offers of service to the *piano nobile* ; and was inexhaustible in his praises of the situation and capabilities of his establishment. I hastened to undeceive him by explaining that I was attached to the person of the Emperor, and that I consequently resided in the palace ; after which I informed him of the purpose of

my visit, expressing at the same time my regret that I should have occasioned so much trouble at so late an hour. The voluble host replied by protestations of devotion and affection towards His Imperial Majesty ; and an assurance that both he and all he possessed were at the disposal of one honored by the confidence of so great a sovereign ; while it was with difficulty that I was enabled to make him understand that he must forthwith awaken the chevalier.

“ ‘*Señor Marchese*—’ he said, with an obsequious smile ; ‘ *Illustrissima Eccellenza*, I doubt that his lordship would hear me, even if I were to shout in his ear the names of all the most beautiful women in Milan, for he sleeps like a monk ; but if you authorise me only to breathe through the keyhole the august name of our Emperor, I wager my life that you will have him on his feet in a second.’

“ Highly diverted by the rhodomontade of the burly landlord, I gave him full power to arouse the sleeper in his own way, provided that he did so at once ; and at length he departed on his errand, and left me alone in one of those spacious Italian rooms, hung with pictures and denuded of furniture, which depress the spirits, and throw the mind back upon the past when it should be occupied by the interests of the present.

“ After what appeared to me a dreary interval, he reappeared with de Cornn, only half dressed, less than half awake, but thoroughly alarmed by my appearance at so unseemly an hour. I soon succeeded, however, in calming his terrors by showing him the written order which I had received from the Emperor for his admission to the palace ; and I then prepared to leave

him, in order to take a few hours' rest, but he would not hear of my departure.

“‘Nonsense!’ he said, with the air of a man who would not be denied; ‘what is the use of going to bed just at daybreak? Come, my dear fellow, let us live over again one of the scenes of our youth. The landlord has some capital wine in his cellar; excellent Monte-Fiascone and Lacryma-Christi; I will desire him to bring us up a few bottles, with some *paste frolle*, counters, cards, and dice, and we will pass the time joyously until we resume our diplomatic duties.’

“I detest alike wine and cards, but I acquiesced in the proposal of the chevalier from mere idleness; as, being already dressed for the audience to which we had been summoned, I shrank from the exertion of undergoing the same process within so short a space of time. As for de Cornn, he would have gambled beside the crater of Vesuvius during an eruption. He played all games of chance admirably, but at the same time, honorably; and with a constitutional carelessness which had more than once nearly involved him in ruin. We played on for several hours, and at length rose from the table, neither having won or lost sufficient to create annoyance; and while the chevalier retired to his own room to assume his court-dress, I stretched myself in an easy chair to await his coming.

“Despite the occupation of the last few hours, he showed no traces of weariness; and with the exception of a few hard lines upon his face, indicating rather excess than age, looked superbly handsome. The carriage was brought round; and at half-past six we were in the private drawing-room of the Emperor.

“It was, even at that early hour, thronged with courtiers, noble, military, ecclesiastical, civil, and foreign, all waiting, not in the hope of obtaining an audience of His Majesty, but simply to see him pass on his way to be crowned.

“As on the previous night, it was M. de Beausset who conducted us to the Imperial closet; and, on a signal of the prefect, I followed him, beckoning to de Cornn to accompany us.

“Our astonishment was not slight, when on entering the apartment we found Napoleon already attired in his coronation robes; but they were not the same as those which he had worn on a similar occasion at Notre Dame; the prevailing color of the present suit being green.

“I presented my companion to the Emperor, who looked at him for an instant as though he would read his very soul, and then said:—

“‘You emigrated?’

“‘Yes, Sire.’

“‘Why have you not caused your name to be erased from the list?’

“‘Because, having entered the service of Her Majesty the Queen of Etruria, to whom I am indebted for all that I possess (as I was ruined by the Revolution), I feared, should I obtain permission to return, that I should not be allowed to remain in the army of a foreign sovereign.’

“‘You were wrong in entertaining such a supposition, Monsieur. The Queen Marie Louise is our faithful ally; and I shall, on the contrary, always feel pleasure in seeing Frenchmen in her service. Apply for your

reintegration in your rights of citizenship. Do you hear, Monsieur? I insist upon your doing so.'

" 'Oh, Sire, an equal rank in your own army to that which I now hold would be the summit of my ambition.'

" 'An equal rank!' exclaimed the Emperor proudly; 'you cannot have considered what you ask. Ere long, M. le Chevalier, every French captain shall be the equal of a foreign colonel, no matter of what nation. When I became Sovereign of France, I resolved to make of my subjects kings and princes in other lands; nor have I changed my determination. You married the daughter of the Bishop of Bristol, did you not?'

" 'His niece, Sire.'

" 'Ha! Every prelate has a niece or two;' said Napoleon sarcastically; 'every English bishop is notorious for his sensuality and dissipation. Does this one never observe to you how advantageous it would be for his countrymen could they renew their commercial relations with France? When he next does so tell him that I am ready to come to an understanding with the British government whenever they make such proposals to me as I consider compatible with the honor of the great nation which I represent. Speak to your father-in-law of the advantages which must accrue to those who pave the way to a solid peace. The Lord Bishop of Bristol is a clever man, with as many debts as brains in spite of his large fortune; you are far from rich; and it will depend entirely on himself to get rid of his creditors, and to provide generously for his son-in-law. You may retire, Messieurs.'

" And we withdrew accordingly.

" As soon as we had left the palace I remarked to the

chevalier that if the Emperor had carefully avoided all mention of the marriage, he had, on the other hand, opened to him the prospect of a much more important negotiation.

“ ‘My good friend;’ said de Cornn; ‘he has made me a second Tantalus.’

“ ‘In what can you possibly resemble the thirsty King of Paphlagonia?’ I asked laughingly.

“ ‘He has shown me the road to riches, and I cannot follow the path.’

“ ‘And why?’

“ ‘Because the bishop so cordially detests both Napoleon and his government, that if he had a treaty of peace actually in his hand he would refuse to open it. So intense, indeed, is his hatred, that I dare not even tell him that such a proposition has been made by the Emperor.’

“ ‘You are mad!’ I retorted; ‘and should remember what a serious responsibility you are taking upon your self.’

“ ‘I know my man, Marquis;’ persisted the chevalier; ‘and I also know that every offer which might reach him, even indirectly, from Napoleon, would be instantly rejected.’

“ I could not credit this assertion, and I still urged de Cornn to make the attempt; after which we laughed together over the pertinacity of the Emperor in calling the English prelate the father-in-law of the Chevalier instead of his uncle; and finally I induced him to comply with the suggestion he had received, and to communicate without delay with the bishop.

“ Meanwhile the plenipotentiary *pro tem.* was some-

what embarrassed by the reply which it was necessary to carry back to his royal mistress, who was impatiently awaiting his return; and he had no sooner entered her presence than she eagerly inquired whether he brought her good or bad news? The chevalier was too gallant and too thoroughly a courtier to tell his tale with perfect accuracy, and he consequently replied that his intelligence partook of both the qualities Her Majesty had named; and when Marie Louise desired him to explain so ambiguous an answer he said respectfully:—

“ ‘Madam, what I sought to imply was, that it is bad for the present, but good as regards the future. The Emperor will not, he declares, separate himself from Josephine at this particular crisis; but he allowed me to perceive in the clearest manner, and beyond all possibility of doubt, that should circumstances one day induce him to consent to a divorce desired by the whole Empire, he will solicit the hand of Your Majesty.’

“Almost ludicrous as such a report as this upon so delicate a subject would have appeared to an unprejudiced listener, Marie Louise, nevertheless, seriously believed in its truth; and her vanity and self-love were both gratified. She saw in perspective her brow cinctured by the Imperial diadem; and in the first rush of her delight she bestowed upon the chevalier the rank of a general.

“What must have been the reflections of the unhappy queen when, only a short time subsequently, she was deprived of her crown, in order that her kingdom might be annexed to the Empire; and when finally the Emperor married her namesake of Austria. For-

tunately for the chevalier he was no longer at Florence when these events took place; he had returned to France, reclaimed his rights of citizenship, and had established himself at Toulouse, where he had a married sister.

“Having ineffectually endeavored to enter the military service of Napoleon, he died while still a young man, in a country-house on one of the banks of the Garonne, a year or two after he had become a widower.

“In the interim the Emperor had commenced the campaign of Austerlitz; and after his departure from Paris I received a letter from de Cornn, which I did not consider it expedient to communicate to His Majesty. These were its contents:—

“‘I have not neglected the honorable mission which was confided to me by the greatest man of the age. I spoke to the bishop on the subject of peace and international commerce, as I was instructed to do in your presence; and with considerable energy, as I was anxious to succeed. He at once refused to listen to any such proposal, and concluded his indignant tirade by saying:—

“‘England would not exist ten years if she were for half that period to be at peace with France. To remain powerful as she is, she must rigidly persevere in her present policy; and she ought, in order to secure her own interests, to determine upon a life-long war with Bonaparte. You may therefore imagine in what a position both you and I must find ourselves should we venture even to speak of peace.’

“‘I write to you from Toulouse, where I have become a member of my sister’s family. I have five nephews

—magnificent youths—for whom, had I any interest with the Emperor, I should assuredly entreat his good offices. As it is, they must make their way for themselves.

“‘ Adieu, my good friend ; I embrace you with all my heart.

“‘ CHEVALIER DE CORNN.’

“ And so ended my first intermeddling (and my last) with an alliance between two crowned heads.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EVE OF THE CORONATION.

THE present chapter is the verbatim narrative of a lady who was on the most familiar terms with the family of Napoleon, and who was present when the conversation took place which forms its subject. It is needless to say that she kept a diary, in which figured the “sayings and doings” of some of the greatest celebrities, and most extraordinary personages in Europe ; or that to this fact she was indebted for the accuracy of detail, which rendered her reminiscences both singular and curious.

“ It was on the evening which preceded the Coronation ”—as above stated, we give her own words—“ and all the Imperial family were assembled in the sleeping-room of the Empress, when Murat entered as brilliant

as a star, attired in the magnificent costume which he was to wear on the morrow. He was eagerly examined, and warmly complimented.

“‘Our ceremony will be a splendid sight;’ he observed complacently.

“‘Yes;’ said his wife; ‘particularly for those who enact the principal parts.’

“‘And who shall say;’ asked the Emperor; ‘that you may not one day yourself do so?’

“‘Have you then a throne to bestow upon me, Napoleon?’ she inquired in her turn.

“‘I am not aware that there is a vacant throne in Europe;’ observed Joseph, not without some emotion.

“‘They may, perhaps, be found’—smiled Hortense.

“‘There can be no doubt,’ remarked Madame Bacciocchi; ‘that a throne is an excellent lounging-chair.’

“‘In which you may rest very ill at ease;’ said Josephine with a sigh.

“‘Not for want of good rocking, at all events;’ replied Louis.

“‘A throne and a sceptre;’ said the Princess Pauline, turning towards the Emperor with one of her most beaming smiles; ‘are pretty things when they are wreathed with roses, or garlanded with laurels, as yours will be, patello mio.’

“‘You are very amiable to think so, Pauline;’ was his rejoinder, as he pressed his lips to her beautiful forehead; ‘but Josephine is right; rest was not meant for crowned heads.’

“‘I should like to know;’ broke in *Madame-Mère*;

‘what are, at the present moment, the feelings of him who considers himself King of France.’

“The remark was so thoroughly unexpected that there was a momentary silence, which was, however, terminated by Napoleon.

“‘Madame;’ he said gravely; ‘the Comte de Provence, who is a man of sense and judgment, will doubtlessly employ this evening, and the night by which it is succeeded, in cursing the flatterers of his brother and sister-in-law; and in extending his maledictions to court-favorites of both sexes, to unwise measures, useless expenditure, bad ministers, and counsellors either treacherous or incapable. He will deplore the vices of his grandfather, the weakness of Louis XVI., the obstinacy of the queen, the cupidity and silliness of the Polignacs, the mad confidence with which the States-General were assembled, as well as the cowardice which shrank before them; and, to crown the work, the irreparable error of the emigration; for those were the positive causes of his own misfortunes, and of my more prosperous career. Those were the serpents by which he was devoured; he is greatly to be pitied; and *I* might have ameliorated his fate.’

“‘Oh, brother!’ exclaimed Caroline—the future Queen of Naples—‘how terrible it must be voluntarily to renounce a crown which has rested during so many centuries on the heads of one’s ancestors! It must be far more bitter than to surrender life itself?’

“‘Were I a sovereign;’ observed Murat; ‘I would never resign my sceptre. No king need live unthroned when he knows how to die.’

“‘Brother ;’ said Napoleon sternly ; ‘despair can never prostrate a really royal nature. Patience possesses a heroism of its own ; and a truly great man waits until some favorable turn of fortune restores him to his original position.’

“‘In that case ;’ said Murat laughingly ; ‘my star would take me back to Figeac ; but I shall refuse to follow it so long as your friendship and my own sword offer me an alternative.’

“‘And so I shall be crowned to-morrow !’ murmured Josephine, as if unconsciously.

“‘My dear mother ;’ remarked Hortense with evident exultation ; ‘no Empress of France was ever yet crowned.’

“‘As for me ;’ pursued the Emperor with a smile ; ‘I have occasionally created some magnificent castles in the clouds ; but I may frankly confess that none of them rivalled the Tuileries. In some of my dreams I have certainly believed myself to be wielding the sword of Roland, but still without the slightest idea that I should ever exchange it for the crown of Charlemagne. At all events’—he continued with increased gravity of tone and manner ; ‘I never gave birth to any chimeras unconnected with the greatness and prosperity of France. Ever since the year 1789 I have been anxious to see her powerful and prosperous ; and Providence has selected me in my own proper person to realise the yearnings of my youth. France shall receive from me all that I have desired for her ; glory, just laws, and a sound administration. I have made a vow to do all for the benefit of the nation, and that vow I will never violate.’

“‘The Pope in Paris—and to crown my son!’ exclaimed Madame Letitia; ‘What would our old uncle the canon of San-Miniato say if he were still alive?’

“‘Say;’ replied the Emperor; ‘why, he would torment me beyond all endurance to have him canonized by the Pope as Father Bonaventura Bonaparte, *Capucin Indigne* of the monastery of Bologna, and already beatified.’

“‘What! have we really a saint in the family?’ was the general inquiry of Cardinal Fesch; ‘How came you, uncle, never to tell us this?’

“‘He was only a beatified Italian, and not a saint;’ replied the Grand Almoner, striving to preserve his dignity; ‘and I have consequently a right to ignore his existence.’

“‘But how comes it, my son;’ demanded *Madame-Mère* reproachfully of the Emperor; ‘that you have never apprised me of this fact?’

“‘Because, my dear mother, I seldom think of the glories of eternity.’

“‘Those of this life suffice to him,’—said Josephine.

“‘Do tell us all you know of this venerable personage;’ urged the Princess Joseph.

“‘Sister;’ said Napoleon; ‘you should have been the last to advance such a request, for you will be quite certain one day to make his acquaintance in heaven.’

“This compliment was at once well-timed, and well-merited, for the virtues of the future Queen of Spain were registered in the book of life.

“‘I repeat the request of my daughter-in-law, Napoléoné;’ said *Madame-Mère*, whose wishes were generally laws to the Emperor.

“‘Listen then;’ replied Napoleon, who was never better pleased than when he was engrossing the whole attention of his audience; ‘I was in Tuscany, after having driven the English out of Leghorn in 1797, when at least thirty different individuals recalled to my memory the existence of a member of my family who was an inhabitant of San-Miniato. This individual was the canon Gregory Bonaparte, a monk, and a Knight of the Order of St. Stephen. I was, of course, delighted to pay my respects to him; and I sent Berthier to apprise him of my intended visit. He received me and all my staff most admirably; and, at the conclusion of a splendid and perfectly canonical dinner, he took me aside and said:—

“‘Nephew—you must permit me to address you thus—you are now on a path of life which must enable you to do honor to your race; and it is proper you should be informed that our family is of very ancient descent, certainly from the lords of Treviso, and probably from the Lombard Kings. I have in my possession patents of nobility which I shall bequeathe to you after I am gone; and which you cannot be otherwise than proud to verify, although you are in the service of a Republic; but the toys of vanity are insignificant beside the solid honor which, situated as you are, you may easily induce the Pope to concede to one of our ancestors. Ask of him therefore to canonize gratuitously Father Bonaventura Bonaparte. Nearly two hundred years have elapsed since his brotherhood caused him to be beatified; his bones repose in this city, in the church of Santa-Maria-della-Vita, in the centre of the chapel of Saint Jerôme, and in a magni-

ficient tomb of porphyry. There, nephew, your duty lies straight before you. Cause your relative to be canonized, and all the greatness of this earth will be eclipsed by the splendor which we shall derive from such an association.'

" 'The good canon then paused for breath, and I scarcely knew how to reply. I contrived, however, to evade the question, and we parted excellent friends; while on my arrival at Florence, I caused the Grand-Duke of Tuscany to send him the grand-cordon of the Order of Saint Stephen to which he already belonged.'

" 'And is all that you have been telling us really a fact?' asked the Princess Joseph.

" 'As true as the gospel;' replied Cardinal Fesch; 'and since you are curious upon the subject, I will confess to you that Pius VII. has often spoken to me of this holy monk.'

" 'And what did he say of him, brother?' inquired *Madame-Mère*.

" 'That he did not doubt the holiness of Father Bonaventura, as he had taken great pains to procure the most accurate information on the point; and that he was quite prepared to canonize him whenever the Emperor should express a wish to that effect. The Holy Father even added, in one of our last interviews, when speaking of the blessed Bonaparte; There can be no doubt that it is he, who, from his heavenly dwelling-place, has led as it were by the hand, his young relative Napoleon in the glorious career which he has pursued; and has, by his own holiness, preserved him from danger even to this day. The Emperor owes to him both his gratitude and his prayers.'

“‘And what would be the cost of a canonization?’ inquired the Princess Borghèse.

“‘At least three hundred thousand francs;’ said the cardinal.

“‘That is very dear;’ observed *Madame-Mère* with a sigh.

“‘Three hundred thousand francs!’ echoed the Emperor; ‘I would rather employ them in augmenting the revenues of the Legion of Honor.’

“This declaration terminated the discussion on the Father Bonaventura Bonaparte; and once more the party began to discuss the ceremony of the following day.

“‘It will be a strange thing;’ remarked Cardinal Fesch; ‘to see an Emperor without either an established aristocracy, or even newly-titled individuals about him.’

“‘Uncle;’ said Napoleon impatiently; ‘Paris was not built in a day; and up to the present moment I have found it more easy to re-construct a throne than to re-establish an aristocracy. Nevertheless, I shall succeed even in that, because it is necessary to me; for, I do not deceive myself, and am quite aware that nobility is an essential ingredient in a state; it is a graceful medium of recompense; while, at the same time, it ornaments and upholds the throne.’

“‘But how do you purpose to re-establish this nobility?’ inquired Joseph; ‘Do you intend to create a new equestrian order, or to resuscitate a dead body?’

“‘All must emanate from myself:’ was the proud reply; ‘nothing throughout my empire shall date before the advent of its supreme chief. I will be the

founder of a new aristocracy, and not the restorer of a mouldy institution.'

"Make haste, then;" said Pauline, arrogantly; 'for I long to see my ante-chambers crowded with titled lacqueys.'

"By making use of such contemptuous epithets, Madame;" said Napoleon; 'you would wound the self-love of men who would never pardon you.'

"Nonsense!" sneered the princess; 'a parcel of pigmies!'

"Sister," was the rejoinder of the Emperor; 'naturalists tell us that in France a single viper cannot emit sufficient poison to destroy life, but that a man is lost should four of the reptiles bite him at the same time. Remember this, and be warned.'

CHAPTER XV.

THE POPE AND THE EMPEROR.

GREAT was the exultation in Rome when the Chevalier Artaud made, in the name of Napoleon, the first proposal to the Pope that he should visit France, in order that the Emperor might be crowned by his holy and august hand. The Pontifical Court were in ecstasies, and the wisest heads of the sacred college were giddy with delight; for one and all believed that since the recently-elected sovereign attached so high a price to his consecration by the successor of St. Peter, his

gratitude would be boundless should his request be granted; and the Church resume all her ancient splendor and supremacy.

Nevertheless, however, pope, cardinals, and bishops were careful not to betray their satisfaction; and in order to enhance the value of the papal acquiescence, they held several secret consistories, in which they drew up a long and formidable list of the obstacles which opposed themselves to the wish of the Emperor; but, at the same time, they were politic enough to prepare a second, in which they set forth the redeeming clauses by which these impediments might be overcome. In the first category figured the restitution of the three legations, and that of the *Comtat Venaisin*; or, should these be refused, certain indemnities in Italy, such as the Principality of Lucca, the Duchy of Carrara, or the Littoral of Spezzia; the re-establishment of a portion of the tithes in France; the restoration of monasteries; the return of all the pictures, statues, and other subjects of art, ceded to the French Republic by the treaty of Tolentino; and moreover, a complete compensation for the reduction of the Pope's revenues since the dismemberment of Poland; together with a host of other conditions, equally, and in some cases, still more extravagant and impossible.

The Papal nuncio, to whom was entrusted the duty of presenting the two lists to the Minister for Foreign Affairs (M. de Talleyrand) was at some loss as to how he should fulfil his mission; for he had breathed the air of Paris long enough, and studied the character of the First Consul carefully enough, to dread the moment



when these exorbitant conditions should be laid before him, as they necessarily must be.

It is said that Talleyrand, notwithstanding his extraordinary perspicacity, was for a moment doubtful how Napoleon would act in so extreme an emergency. Aware of the importance which he attached to the idea of being crowned by a Pope, he *feared* that the Emperor might accede too easily to some of the preposterous demands of the Roman court; but his alarm was soon dissipated. Napoleon read the documents presented to him with as little emotion as though their contents were utterly unimportant; and then, taking up a pen, he dashed out all the conditions which he was called upon to ratify, and wrote at the foot of the page:—

“I asked a favor; but if I am driven to do so, I shall compel the performance of a duty. The successor of Charlemagne, I have inherited his power; let it not be forgotten at Rome that Popes, put upon their trial, have had to plead their cause before the tribunal of the Emperor.”

These few words changed the whole face of affairs. The French Legation at Rome received an order to inform the most influential of the Cardinals that in case of a refusal on the part of Pius VII. to fulfil the will of the Emperor, they would be held responsible; an assurance which they had no sooner received, than, with few exceptions, the whole of the papal council entreated him to submit to what had doubtless been ordained for the benefit, and in the interests, of their holy religion. The remark of one of the conclave, as he rose to retire, has been preserved. “The Emperor;”

he said, shrugging his shoulders; "has filched his coronation from us."

While enumerating the demands of the Court of Rome, I omitted to mention one which was no better received than the others. They demanded the abolition of Bossuet's four famous articles on which are based the liberty of the Gallican Church; alleging the example of Louis XIV., who had abandoned them; and offering, at the same time, to produce the Decree by which he had done so, with his autograph signature.

No doubt the Pope did this in all sincerity and honor; as, had he been aware, as it was confidently averred, that the said signature was a forgery, he could never have sought to avail himself of such a document.

Disappointed in all his hopes, and deeply mortified to find that he must bow his will before that of the man whom he considered alike as his own enemy, and that of Rome, Pius VII. was by no means in a desirable frame of mind when he reached Paris; nor could all the magnificence with which he was received, nor the homage by which he was surrounded, reconcile him to his compulsory visit to the French metropolis.

Three days previous to the Coronation, the Pope, having ascertained that Napoleon had been only married to Josephine by the civil authorities, and that no religious sanction had subsequently ratified their union, formally required that they should be united before the altar, alleging that he could not otherwise conscientiously officiate at the forthcoming ceremony. His wish was complied with; and the august couple received the nuptial benediction from Cardinal Fesch, at midnight, in the chapel of the Tuileries, and in the

presence of a limited number of witnesses, among whom were Prince Eugène and Marshal Duroc.

When the marriage of Marie Louise to the Emperor was first proposed, she caused an inquiry to be made of Josephine, whether she had, or had not, been married at the altar ; declaring that, in the former case, she would never consent to an union which she should regard as a sacrilege. To this question Josephine replied by referring her to the *Moniteur*; thus evading the truth without betraying it ; as she was well aware that Napoleon would never allow the official journal to publish the fact of so tardy a ceremony ; and to this circumstance must be attributed the assertion made by the Duke de Rovigo in his memoirs, that the first marriage of the Emperor had never received the sanction of the Church.

The Coronation was no sooner over than Pius VII. expressed his desire to return to Rome, and even wished to fix the precise day for his departure ; but in so pertinaciously urging the presence and pious offices of the Holy Father at the recent ceremony, Napoleon had other and more extended views than those about him had imagined ; and he no sooner ascertained the anxiety of the Pope to regain the Vatican, than he summoned Cardinal Fesch to his presence.

“What on earth can His Holiness mean by such indecent haste to leave a country in which he has been so nobly treated ?” he asked angrily. “There must be some cause for conduct at once so extraordinary and so offensive.”

“Sire ;” said the churchman calmly ; “a charcoal burner is master in his own hut ; and the

Pope is attached to Rome because it belongs to him."

"That is a poor reason to advance;" replied the Emperor. "If he will only stay where he is, he need be at no loss for a domain. Surely he would be well lodged at Chambord, or at Tours where the churches are superb, or at Bourges where I would build him a palace, and where we should be neighbors; I could visit him continually from Fontainebleau. He should have a numerous, and complete college of cardinals, a guard of honor, and all the veneration and respect that he can desire."

"Your Majesty does not then, if I rightly understand you, wish him ever to return to Rome!" replied Fesch.

"I do not say that;" was the quick rejoinder; "he is, of course, at liberty to act as he sees fit—but why does he not visit the south? I understand that they are very pious at Toulouse, and that the nobility of that city are fervent Catholics from their heads to their feet; while, moreover, he would find there celebrated basilicks, with a cave in which are preserved the bodies of six or seven apostles, a holy thorn, and the remains of forty martyrs; beside which ancient monument we could construct a second Vatican."

"In that case His Holiness must necessarily altogether renounce Rome;" persisted the Cardinal.

"I do not say that;" repeated Napoleon; "but, frankly, if he has an affection for me, and for France, should he not be delighted to recover Avignon, a city full of pontifical reminiscences, whose inhabitants still believe themselves to be the subjects of the Pope? Well, His Holiness might reign over that ancient city,

keep an eye upon Italy, and stretch a hand over Germany. The position is unique; and no better residence could be chosen for the common Father of the Faithful."

"But, Sire, by taking up his abode at Avignon, the Pope would abandon Rome;" once more phlegmatically remarked Fesch.

"I do not say that;" reiterated the Emperor; "are you endeavoring to test the extent of my patience? I am desirous to give pleasure to *your* friend, to an old man whom I love and am anxious to render happy. What can he do in Rome? He will be constantly exposed to my suspicions; he will be compelled to temporise with the English, and will consequently incur my displeasure. At Avignon, on the contrary, we should always maintain a good understanding; I would overwhelm him with gifts; and the Holy See would be more wealthy than it has ever been."

"I will speak to him on the subject;" said the cardinal; "but I fear that he will not abandon Rome, as you appear to wish."

"I never said that I wished it;" exclaimed Napoleon sharply.

"But in point of fact"—

"Fact is in many cases nothing;" said the Emperor; "and form everything. Look at one of our Parisians; only give him a ticket for the theatre inscribed 'Dress-Circle,' and he will mount to the third tier without a murmur, provided that at the door of the hen-coop which is appropriated to his use, he still sees the magic words 'Dress-Circle' inscribed upon his ticket."

The cardinal could not restrain a laugh at the puerile

comparison of his Imperial interlocutor ; but he nevertheless pledged himself to make his proposition known to the Pope ; and he kept his word, although he did so very guardedly.

Pius VII., on his side, affected not to understand his meaning, and persisted in his resolution to re-cross the Alps ; and Napoleon was compelled to submit in his turn, for it was impossible to detain the Pope in France against his will, as Fouché counselled him to do, without risking a frightful scandal, and being guilty of a glaring act of ingratitude.

During his last interview with Napoleon, His Holiness complained to him that he had too long delayed to fulfil the promises which he had made through the intervention of his relative and ambassador, Cardinal Fesch, which he repeated in detail ; but as each pledge was mentioned, the Emperor affected more and more surprise, and declared that all these circumstances were entirely unknown to him.

“How, Sire !” exclaimed the Holy Father indignantly ; “am I to understand that the three Legations will not be restored to Rome ?”

“I have given no assurance to that effect,” said Napoleon.

“And that St. Peter will not, in my person, once more possess Avignon ?” again asked Pius.

“The constitution of the Empire presents an invincible obstacle to your so doing,” replied the Emperor ; “I have succeeded the Republic one and indivisible.”

“And that the French clergy will not recover such of their estates as were not sold ?” pursued the Pope ;

“and that you will not take measures to render them independent of the budget?”

“I can certify to Your Holiness;” was the quiet rejoinder; “that my priests are perfectly satisfied to receive their salary when it becomes due, and have no cause to feel any anxiety whether it hails or rains.”

“I was promised that the monasteries should be re-opened;” said Pius.

“And so they shall;” was the reply; “I highly approve of those pious retreats. Endow them, and I will authorise their re-establishment.”

“Good, my son; good;” said the poor Pope, believing that Napoleon was beginning to yield; “but as regards the other points?”

“I have nothing whatever to do with them;” tartly replied the Emperor; “I gave no such orders; it is Cardinal Fesch who, in the excess of his zeal—”

“I should be glad;” observed Pius; “to hear what he has to say upon the subject; he is only in the next room; permit me to have him summoned.”

“Despite my earnest desire to oblige Your Holiness;” was the rejoinder of Napoleon; “I cannot consent to anything which can tend to humiliate my uncle. I shall have to reproach him; and I cannot forget that he is the brother of my mother. When we discuss this subject we must do it privately. Moreover, what I decline to concede to-day, circumstances may allow me to accomplish some time hence; the interests of the Church are as dear to me as my own; and I shall end by finding some means of effecting a satisfactory understanding between us. But let us no longer dwell upon the past; you have considerable trouble in maintaining

your authority over the Legateships; the petulance of those people required to be suppressed by myself. The *Comtat* weighed heavily upon you, and I have rendered you an essential service by liberating you from such a thorn in the flesh."

The Emperor said much more in the same calm and determined manner, and the Pope obtained no concession from him in any shape; but trusting that he should succeed better with Talleyrand, His Holiness sent to request that the minister would wait on him in the pavilion of Flora, in which he had resided during his sojourn in Paris. The wily diplomatist at once obeyed the summons; listened to his complaints, which he could not at first comprehend, and then eluded them; next endeavored to evade a frank explanation; and finally, driven into a corner by the pertinacity of the Sovereign Pontiff, he said with the utmost composure:—

"Your Holiness will do well not to torment yourself about the past; what is done, is done. The Emperor has so much strength of character that you, by your power as God's Vicar, would more easily release from purgatory the souls that are now suffering there, than rend from him the smallest portion of the three Legateships, or of the *Comtat Venaissin*."

"In that case, my son," said Pius VII., "I shall throw this fraud upon his conscience."

"Most Holy Father;" smiled the Prince of Benevento; "we will endeavor to repair the evil by loyally winning your indulgences."

"But;" said the Pope sturdily, "he has appropriated the wealth of God."

“All the earth is the Lord’s;” was the sententious rejoinder.

“He has deceived me !” exclaimed the Pontiff, whose patience was almost exhausted.

“And me also ;” said Talleyrand ; “and Cardinal Fesch into the bargain ; but how can one venture to utter a reproach to a man who is at the head of a million of soldiers, and who has ten millions of revenue ?”

Two days after this conversation Pius VII. left Paris.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTAIN DUROSIER.

At the period of Napoleon’s coronation, the French people were absorbed by one great idea—that of glory. The success of their arms in Italy and Germany had intoxicated the whole nation ; and not only were the young men thirsting for military distinction, but even the children, abandoning all their former pastimes, found their sole amusement in a mimic warfare, wherein they parodied the veterans whose scars and crosses were the objects of their envy.

It was precisely while this passion was at fever-heat that a certain M. Durosier, who had amassed a considerable fortune by army contracts, took up his abode in Paris with his family, which consisted of his wife, an only son about six years of age, and a brother-in-law,

who had been as successful as himself by his spéculations on the Stock Exchange.

The Durosiers hired a very fine house in one of the most fashionable streets, which they furnished in a lavish style of magnificence ; and as the lady was still young, much admired, and remarkably fond of society, it was not long before they found themselves surrounded by a large and brilliant circle of friends ; some attracted by the grace and beauty of the hostess, and others by the wealth and good cheer of the host.

The children of the several families necessarily became acquainted in their turn ; and the boys, many of whom were the sons of officers of high rank, resolved to form themselves into a regiment, of which Timoléon Durosier was ere long promoted to be the chief, under the title of *le petit caporal*, a name which had already become historical. This formidable corps was composed of children from six to eight years old, who went through their gun and sword exercise with a gravity and precision that delighted their parents. Among these young warriors Timoléon was the smallest ; but his slight figure was so muscular, and the expression of his eye so keen and imperious even at that early age, that Nature appeared to have destined him one day to command his fellow-men.

The little corporal proved himself worthy of the honorable post that had been conferred upon him ; and was as regular a martinet as any old adjutant in the whole army. His regiment numbered fifty rank and file ; and the exercises took place daily, at the house of one or other of their parents ; where the fathers, amused and gratified by the progress of their warlike exertions,

encouraged them by their applause, as well as by occasional contributions to their military costume and accoutrements; while the mothers, each already dreaming that her own particular darling might perchance live to wield a marshal's bâton, made no attempt to interfere, or to express the slightest apprehension as to the results of an occupation so unsuited to their tender age.

In the year 1806, the regiment of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, as it was officially designated by its members, was in a perfect state of discipline and efficiency, and went through all its evolutions with a steadiness and precision which elicited the utmost applause from those who were permitted to witness them; and it finally chanced that the boy-battalion became a subject of conversation at the Tuileries, when the Emperor expressed a wish to see the young volunteers manœuvre; a wish which was of course immediately complied with.

Two days subsequently, the palace-chamberlain, Duroc, entered the apartment of Napoleon early in the morning, and said gravely:—

“Sire, can Your Majesty have forgotten that a review is to take place to-day?”

“What review?” inquired the Emperor; “I know of none.”

“The review of the boy-battalion, which Your Majesty condescended to command.”

“Ah! true;” said the modern Cæsar with a smile; “and where are these seedling Marshals of France drawn up?”

“In the gardens of the palace, Sire.”

“ Good ;” was the reply ; “ I will not keep them waiting. Follow me.”

The Emperor wore the traditional costume ; the grey frock-coat and cocked hat : and as soon as he appeared at the end of the avenue the drums beat to arms ; and Napoleon, a minute or two afterwards, found himself in front of fifty boys, arranged in double ranks, armed with firelocks, and as upright and motionless as so many grenadiers. He passed slowly along the line, looking each lad steadily in the face ; and then, turning to Duroc, said in a low voice : “ So far, all is admirable. These boys are every one soldiers at heart.”

But what was the exultation of the little band, when the hero of Campo-Formio himself gave the word of command, and watched every evolution with the most jealous scrutiny without once assuming his formidable frown.

“ Colonel ;” said Napoleon, at the conclusion of the manœuvres ; “ your regiment thoroughly performs its parade duties, and I could not desire better drilled troops. Go on as you have begun, and I shall not forget you. What is your name ?”

“ Timoléon Durosier, Emperor.”

“ Very well ;” replied Napoleon, as, with a smile, he lightly tapped him upon the cheek ; “ you must remind me some years hence that you once commanded a regiment.”

So saying he walked away, pursued as he retired by shrill and enthusiastic shouts of “ Long live the Emperor !”

When he had disappeared, Timoléon, with erect mien and flashing eyes, dismissed his men, and hastened

home to report all that had passed ; but his father was already apprised of the honor which had been conferred upon his son, and was awaiting him with his congratulations in the hall.

“My beloved boy!” he exclaimed, clasping him in his arms ; “this is a proud day for me. Only to think that the Emperor should have tapped you on the cheek in token of his satisfaction. I can scarcely credit it even now.”

“But where is my mother?” asked the juvenile warrior ; “Has she no kiss for me? Is she not as well pleased as you are?”

The poor mother was meanwhile weeping in her chamber, impatiently awaiting the return of her idolised boy ; but in her joy there was a painful mixture of bitterness.

“My darling Timoléon, my loved and only child ;” she murmured amid her tears ; “this day will, I feel, decide the destiny of your life—you will be a soldier,—and why I know not, but a voice within me assures me that you will not survive your first battle-field. Oh ! why, why, has this fatal prescience been granted to me?”

At this instant the lad bounded into the room, followed by his father.

“Mother! mother!” he exclaimed, springing to her neck ; “I am the happiest boy in France. The Emperor gave me a little slap in the face, and told me that he would not forget me.”

Madame Durosier warmly returned his embrace, but her tears fell copiously on his bright curls of fair hair, as she sobbed out :—

“Your joy makes me glad, my dear son—and yet I dare not look into the future.”

“What can you fear, Madame?” demanded her husband; “our boy will make a brave man, and will one day be the boast and honor of the family.”

“If they do not kill him—” gasped the agitated mother.

“Never fear;” said the boy proudly; “a brave man has more reason to hope for a long life than a coward; for a good soldier has only the enemies of his country to contend against, while a craven finds plenty more, even among his own countrymen. Besides, did not the Emperor promise that he would not forget me? Cheer up, mother, and—*Vive l'Empereur!*”

From that eventful day young Durosier became the pet and proverb of the noble Faubourg, and the sons of many of the first families of Paris solicited admission to his ranks; but notwithstanding his military tastes, and the duties which increased upon him as his corps augmented in numbers, he gladdened the heart of his mother by the perseverance with which he pursued his more peaceful studies.

At the close of the year 1812 our hero was one of the first students admitted to the *Ecole Polytechnique*; whence, at the period of the Invasion, he was gazetted to an ensigncy in one of the regiments of the Staff at Head Quarters; and, having taken leave of his family, he hastened to his post, full of enthusiasm and hope.

At the battle of Montmirail he chanced to be in attendance on the Emperor at the moment when it became essential to dispatch an order to one of the Generals of Division; and Napoleon, hastily summon-

ing him to his side, gave him instructions to deliver it without delay.

“Spare neither yourself nor your horse, Sir;” he said sternly; “for there is not a moment to lose, and return at once to report to me that my order has been obeyed.”

Durosier galloped off amid a shower of shot and shells, and within a quarter of an hour he was again beside the Emperor. His duty was performed.

“You have behaved well, Monsieur;” said Napoleon, “when he had received his report; “you have a stout heart and a clear head, though you are still only a youngster. I give you your captain’s brevet, and attach you to my person. What is your name?”

“Durosier, Sire.”

“It seems familiar to me. On what occasion have I before heard it?”

“I was the colonel of the boy-battalion, Your Majesty.”

“Ah! I remember. Well, that is an additional reason why I should attach you to my person.”

“It is too late, Sire;” murmured the young soldier.

“Too late, Captain Durosier? and why?”

“Sire, they have hit me;” and as he spoke he withdrew a handkerchief saturated with blood from the breast of his coat. “All will soon be over—*Vive l’Empereur! Vive la France!*”

He reeled for an instant in his saddle, and then fell heavily into the arms of an officer who had sprung forward to support him.

Timoléon Durosier was a corpse.

“So young!—so young!—and so brave!—and to die

on his first battle-field!" exclaimed the Emperor, as he bent down for an instant over the body: "Poor boy! Poor boy!"

Then setting spurs to his charger, he galloped off, as if unable to linger over so sad a spectacle.

CHAPTER XVII.

NAPOLEON AND THE COURT-MILLINERS.

THE unbounded generosity of Josephine amounted to prodigality. Had she been born "under the purple" she could not have been more Imperial in her ideas of patronage and liberality; and even when only the wife of the First Consul she appeared to have totally forgotten the period of poverty and privation through which she had herself passed, and to consider money as the most unimportant matter in the world.

On one occasion, during the Consulate, M. Chaptal, then Minister of the Interior, had refused to permit the subsequently famous tragedian Mademoiselle Duchesnois to make her *début* in Paris, alleging that "she was too ugly to have a chance of success;" a declaration which greatly annoyed her friend Madame Lebrun, the artist, whose admirable talent had earned for her the honor of being the first female painter ever admitted into the French Academy.

Aware that, should the objection of M. Chaptal really exclude this young actress from the Parisian stage, her future prospects must be utterly blighted, and her past

studies, arduous as they had been for years, rendered valueless, the generous-hearted woman resolved to explain the painful position of her friend to Madame de Montesson, and to entreat her good offices in her behalf. The marquise, who was ever ready to assist the unfortunate, at once promised to give an evening reception to which she would invite Madame Bonaparte, and where she would present Mademoiselle Duchesnois to her notice. "I will inform her beforehand;" she continued; "wherefore I especially request of her not to fail me, and then she will be quite sure to come; for, as you must be aware, Madame Bonaparte never loses an opportunity of doing a good action, or of repairing an injustice."

The party consisted of about two hundred individuals, to the whole of whom Mademoiselle Duchesnois was formally presented; nor were a score among them found to differ in opinion with M. Chaptal; the young aspirant to tragic honors being at that period of such extraordinary ugliness that not a single prospect of her ever becoming less forbidding in appearance could be detected. Thin to positive attenuation, apparently ill-made, and sallow to excess, no one could for a moment anticipate that she would one day become the successful rival of Mademoiselle Georges, whose incomparable beauty had enslaved the whole Consular court, from Bonaparte himself to his junior aide-de-camp. Not having means to compete with the costly beauties with whom she thus suddenly found herself brought into contact, the costume of Mademoiselle Duchesnois was at once of simple fashion and of inferior materials; but the experienced skill of the zealous Madame Lebrun

had, nevertheless, by the arrangement of her hair and dress, contrived to give a sort of wild grace to her *protégée* which was not without its charm.

On their entering the saloon the two friends were at once led up to Madame Bonaparte, who was conversing with the critical Home Minister, and were most graciously received by the wife of the First Consul; and when she had made her curtesy to the general guests, Mademoiselle Duchesnois, at the request of the marquise, proceeded to declaim the rôle of *Phedre* from Racine's tragedy of that name, and a portion of that of *Roxane*, which she did so admirably as to excite universal enthusiasm; her want of beauty was no longer remembered; while, so great was the power of her genius, that some of her auditors even went so far as to declare that in her moments of enthusiasm she was almost handsome. M. Chaptal, carried away in his turn by her wonderful powers, and remarking, moreover, the delight of Madame Bonaparte, hesitated no longer; but then and there, with many flattering assurances of the pleasure which he had derived from her recitations, signed the authority for her appearance. This was no sooner done than it was decided that, in order to accustom her to the stage, she should first perform once or twice in the theatre at Versailles, Madame Bonaparte and the Marquise de Montesson undertaking to provide her with a suitable wardrobe; while all those present were invited to attend these preliminary representations, which were productive of a success that was subsequently destined to engender a dissension between the factions of the rival votaries of Melpomene, so bitter as even to involve several arrests.

In order to secure the prosperity of the national manufactures, the First Consul had issued an order that no ladies should be received at the Tuileries in dresses of foreign material; and as Madame Bonaparte had in her possession a great quantity of Indian fabrics, both in silk, cachemire, and muslin, embroidered in gold and silver, she presented them *en masse* to the young tragedian; accompanied by a magnificent set of topaz, which had been given to her by M. de Souza, the Portuguese minister; nor did she discontinue her kindly care of the *débutante* until she no longer required it.

But it was not only under the eyes of the Court that Josephine evinced her sympathy with those who suffered. On one occasion, after she had become Empress of the French, as she was driving towards Caen accompanied by Madame d'Arberg, one of her ladies of honor, she caught sight of a poor young woman carrying twin infants in her arms, while a little girl of about four years of age was clinging to her ragged dress, as she stood by her mother's side gazing in speechless wonder at the advancing equipages.

"Your purse, Madame!" exclaimed Josephine, turning abruptly towards her companion.

"I have not one about me," was the reply.

With an impatient gesture, the Empress hastily unclasped a heavy chain of gold which she wore about her neck; and, throwing it from the carriage window, cried at the pitch of her voice, in order that the object of her bounty might be assured of her intention:—

"It is for you and your children."

Before Madame d'Arberg had recovered from her

surprise, the wretched group were already far distant, and the Empress was talking upon indifferent subjects, without making the slightest allusion to the little scene which had just taken place.

On the following morning, while Josephine was still seated at breakfast, the head-valet addressed a few words in a low voice to the chamberlain on duty, who rose, and in his turn communicated some information, in the same undertone, to his Imperial mistress; who, looking round upon her ladies, said with deep emotion:—

“Would you believe, Mesdames, that the poor woman we saw on the highroad yesterday, has brought back the chain, asserting that I must have made a mistake, or that I let it fall by accident? Go, and tell her to wait.”

On rising from table, Josephine sent for the honest peasant, and gave her a note to the Bishop of Evreux, requesting him to dispose of the chain, and with the proceeds to secure a decent lodging and some present comforts for the evidently destitute creature, should he, on making inquiry, find that she was worthy of her future care. “But in any case;” she added; “let her be comfortably lodged and clothed, as well as her children.”

The adventure terminated satisfactorily to the Empress; her new *protégée* proving to be the widow of a sailor who had perished by shipwreck, and a woman of irreproachable character; who, having heard that the Empress was always performing acts of charity and benevolence, had undertaken, with her helpless orphans, a journey from her native village, in the hope of ob-

taining employment in the lace-factory established by Her Majesty. We need scarcely add that her hopes were realised, and that thenceforward she became an object of great and untiring interest to her illustrious patroness.

In the year 1814, near the close of March, and a few days previous to her departure for Navarre, as Josephine was standing at the window of one of the pavilions at la Malmaison which overlooked the road, she saw a Sister of Charity—one of those admirable women who devote their lives to the sick and the afflicted, and who either spend their days in the gloomy wards of an hospital, or among the children of the poor—slowly making her way towards Paris, and evidently footsore and fatigued.

“My good sister;” asked the Empress, as she was passing under the window; “where are you coming from so early?”

“From St. Germain, Madame;” meekly replied the nun, who had been employed in telling the beads of her rosary, and who was quite ignorant of the identity of her interlocutor.

“Indeed! why you have already walked a long way. Have you much further to go?”

“I shall perhaps be compelled to go to Paris, Madame; but probably I may remain at Nanterre, as I fear that my errand will be unsuccessful, from my not being acquainted with any one at the Direction.”

“What Direction?” inquired the Empress; “Have you business to transact with any of the General Directors?”

“My business, Madame;” said the sister; “concerns

our hospital, which is just now very poor, and in great want of many necessaries; and as I heard from our doctors that a large quantity of English cloth had been seized, and that M. Coustard Saint-Lô was distributing it among the military hospitals, I thought I would try to induce him to spare a few pieces to us, as our sick have no sheets to their beds."

"You were quite right in doing as you have done, *ma bonne sœur*," said Josephine; "but you do not know M. Coustard. Leave me to execute your commission, and I will be answerable for its success."

"Ah, Madame;" exclaimed the nun; "I should not have dared to hope for so much generous kindness from a stranger; but you will do a good deed, Madame; and one for which the poor wounded soldiers, who are brought to us every day, will bless you."

With a lowly bend and a murmured benison the nun proceeded on her way, but she had not gone more than a few yards when she remembered that she had omitted to ask the name of her benefactress; and as, on looking back, she discovered that the lady was still standing on the same spot, watching her as she pursued her journey, she suddenly turned back, and said earnestly:—

"Pardon me, Madame, and believe that it is from no idle feeling of curiosity that I again intrude upon you; but I am anxious to know the name of the person who honors our poor hospital by her protection, in order that we may remember it in our prayers. I almost believe that I suspect it; but—"

"Oh!" smiled the Empress kindly; "It is poor Josephine—but do not mention our interview to any one."

"I am not surprised to receive such an order from

Your Majesty ;” was the respectful rejoinder ; “ for I am well aware that you never like your good deeds to be blazoned abroad ; but as it is indeed to the best friend of the unfortunate that I have had the honor to address myself, I no longer fear to be importunate in urging you to do us another very great service : we are sadly in want of lint, and if Your Majesty would condescend—”

“ You shall have as much lint as you require ;” interposed the Empress ; “ we will immediately set to work upon it.”

And from that day until the period of her departure, Josephine employed all her evenings in making lint, assisted by the ladies of her household.

On the marriage of Prince Eugène with the Princess Amalie of Bavaria, she discovered that he was deeply mortified at being unable to purchase in Munich any present for his bride-elect which could compete with the magnificent offerings of the Emperor ; and that not even among the stores of M. Nitot, the crown-jeweller, who had followed the court from Paris, anything sufficiently costly for the purpose could be found ; thus the Prince was in despair, when the self-sacrificing Josephine came to his aid.

On the first representation of a new tragedy, the Empress had been forcibly struck by the novelty and beauty of a diadem worn by Mademoiselle Georges ; of whom she had desired M. Nitot to request the loan, in order that he might make one for herself precisely similar. This splendid ornament had only been completed a few days ; and, as she had never worn it, she presented it to her son, who hastened to lay it at the feet

of his future wife ; while so gorgeous a gift was the more valued by the royal family of Bavaria, that the simplicity of their court was extreme ; and a cashmere shawl, given to the Queen by the Empress on the same occasion, was the first of which Her Bavarian Majesty had ever been possessed.

These few examples will serve to prove that if Josephine was profuse even to prodigality, she was at least right regally munificent ; and that if she carried her love of dress to a great extreme, she might well be pardoned when it is remembered that the Conqueror of the European Continent, who might have been supposed to be totally indifferent to the respective merits of satins and velvets, was, on the contrary, so hypercritical upon the subject as frequently to carry his comments far beyond the boundaries of good-breeding.

The Empress had given orders that Mesdames Despeaux and Corot, her dress-makers, should always be admitted to her presence whenever they had any novelties to exhibit ; while the Emperor had stringently commanded that they should never be suffered to enter the state apartments ; and, above all, that they should never be allowed to take up their station in the galleries through which the officers of the household were compelled to pass.

On one occasion the Emperor came upon Mademoiselle Despeaux, who was accompanied by two of her assistants laden with bandboxes ; both of whom, the ladies, not the *cartons*, were extremely beautiful. As she caught sight of Napoleon, Mademoiselle Despeaux, who had been waiting for above half an hour until the Empress should leave her bath, endeavored to conceal

herself behind some of the palace-officials, but she was unable to effect her purpose ; and her heart sank within her as she saw him walk straight to the spot ; and heard him exclaim angrily :—

“Madame, this is no place for you, as you ought to be well aware ; go and find the waiting-women of Her Majesty.”

During the breakfast, until which hour he had been “nursing his wrath to keep it warm,” he turned abruptly to Josephine, and said curtly :—

“If you persist in allowing your rag-merchants to intrude themselves into the apartments where my officers are lounging about, and endeavoring to amuse their idleness by making love to them, I warn you that I will take such measures as shall enforce obedience to my commands to the contrary.”

The Empress promised, for about the hundredth time, that it should never happen again ; but on the following morning Abbé, Noutier, and Mademoiselle Noël succeeded Mesdames Despeaux and Corot with their gloves, fans, and laces.

The admission of these fashionable milliners into the palace was fatal to the purses of the great men of the court, and occasioned continual matrimonial quarrels ; as well as unliquidated debts, which, whenever they reached the ears of Napoleon, excited his violent anger.

The Empress was accused of inciting her ladies to the reckless extravagance of which they were guilty ; when she invariably replied by declaring that she would pay their bills, forgetting that she was not unfrequently unable to pay her own.

At the close of one of these stormy discussions, the celebrated modiste Leroi was presumptuous enough to complain to Napoleon of the inadequacy of the income which he accorded to the Empress for the purposes of her toilette ; but his impertinence was met by a frown so stern and withering that his eyes sank beneath it, and he withdrew in silence.

The costume of the Empress was a perpetual subject of criticism to her husband ; and he one day reproached her before all her ladies with having introduced more new fashions into France than there were days in the year. "It is quite enough for me to have your personal debts to pay, without being compelled to make presents to my aides-de-camp ;" he said in conclusion ; "in order to prevent your rag-merchants from proclaiming all over Paris that their wives owe them money."

He frequently teased her while she was dressing, for making use of rouge and pearl-powder, to which cosmetics he had a great aversion ; and one evening, when she was preparing for the opera, and had made more than usual use of both, he advised her to lay them on still thicker : "Come, do not be afraid ;" he urged sarcastically ; "apply another coat, as this lady has done, although it strikes me that she has been more sparing to-night than is her general habit." And as he spoke he pointed to one of her ladies of honor, to whom only two days previously he had said : "Madame, why have you appeared in her Majesty's circle without rouge ? You look as if you had just recovered from a confinement."

It was a singular mania in a man whose will was law, and upon whom devolved so many and such

onerous duties, to be perpetually interfering with the dress of all the women with whom he came into contact ; nor was it easy to réconcile his inconsistency ; as while on some occasions he became furious at the expense in which the elaborate toilette of the ladies of his court involved their husbands, he rebuked them at other times for the want of respect evinced by their disregard of the duties of their position ; and so perpetually was he occupied by the subject, that the Empress having ventured to put on a dress of which he had expressed his dislike, when she was about to hold a public reception, he overturned an inkstand into her lap and so compelled her to change her entire costume.

Whenever he was in Paris, the ladies of the palace spent more than half their time in dressing and undressing. There was the morning toilette, the dinner toilette, and the evening toilette, all of which were to be scrupulously observed ; and if it chanced that one of them presented herself in a robe which she had worn on the preceding day, he never failed to accost her with a frowning brow, and to ask sharply : " Have you no other gown, Madame, than that which you have on ? Can you not induce your husband to purchase you another ? " And as soon as the words were uttered, he turned his back on the delinquent.

At a ball given at the Tuileries, in honor of the marriage of the Princess Stephanie, Grand-Duchess of Baden, as he was sauntering through the room, he accosted a lady near him with the abrupt question : " Who are you ? "

" Sire ; " she replied ; " I am Madame Charpentier. "

" The wife of the General ? "

“ Yes, Sire.”

“ Well, Madame Charpentier ;” was the rejoinder ; “ you are most unbecomingly dressed, and very much altered for the worse.”

And leaving the poor woman pale with mortification, he moved on.

The next who attracted his attention was extraordinarily beautiful, and remarkable for the profusion and fine quality of the diamonds with which she was literally covered. The Emperor was evidently struck by her appearance, and addressed her with a smile, as he asked : “ And who are you, Madame ?”

“ Sire ;” was the reply of the lady, who was not slow to perceive the impression which she had produced, and who returned his look of admiration so gratefully as to dazzle him with the full light of her magnificent eyes ; “ I am Madame Simon.”

“ Ah, yes !—I know—” said Napoleon, without making an effort to restrain the burst of laughter with which he turned away.

Madame Simon had formerly been Mademoiselle Lange, an actress at the *Comedie Française*, whose lovely face had won the heart of her husband, an ex-carriage-builder of enormous wealth, who subsequently became a banker. Girodet had painted her portrait shortly after her marriage, but with all his talent he had failed to satisfy either the husband or the wife ; the lady not considering it sufficiently handsome, and the gentleman declaring it to be greatly overcharged. Under these circumstances, the artist, secure in his celebrity, and conscious that he had done full justice to his subject, resolved to avenge the insult offered to

his genius; and he accordingly refused with great indignation to abate one sous of his demand. As a natural consequence, he would not part with the picture, but revenged himself by altering several of the accessories; and as the lady was represented reclining upon a couch, he transformed her into a Danæe, above whom a profuse shower of gold was descending, while beside her strutted a huge turkey-cock. This allegorical painting, in whose principal figure every one instantly recognised Madame Simon, he forwarded to the Exhibition, where it was exposed for two days before the circumstance reached the ears of his victim, who hastened to claim the picture, asserting that she was willing to pay any price which he might demand for it.

Girodet, satisfied by the success of his scheme, declined to grant her request, but pledged himself that he would put the obnoxious painting out of sight; a promise which he honorably fulfilled; and it was the recollection of the Danæe which unfortunately crossed the mind of the Emperor, and caused him to indulge in the ill-timed mirth to which we have alluded.

One day his anger was extreme. He had caused to be seized and burnt a quantity of English merchandise, among which were some magnificent muslins intended for the Empress, but seeing her deeply hurt by the disappointment she had experienced in consequence, he at length said:—

“Listen to me, Josephine. The greatest grief, or the greatest punishment that a husband can inflict upon his wife is to lock up her bonnets, her dresses, and her fripperies. I will forgive you this time, and I will even

restore to you some of the packages which have escaped destruction, for I beg to tell you that it was I who personally laid the embargo upon what you call your orders ; but I will do so only upon one condition, which is, that should you ever make a similar attempt, I pledge you my word that I will arrest, prosecute, and shoot all those who commit a similar crime in order to administer to your vanity. I will have no mercy upon smugglers ; they are the ruin of a nation ; and, Empress though you may be, you are nevertheless not above the laws. On the contrary, I will prove to you that you shall yourself, should you again transgress in a like manner, afford an example to all France of my determination to see them respected."

The Empress made no reply.

Some days subsequently he found Mademoiselle Despeaux in the saloon of Josephine, delivering a lecture on the mysteries of her profession to the whole feminine court, amid which he fell like a bomb-shell.

"What ! here again !" he vociferated in the voice of a Stentor ; "Does it never strike you, Madame, that you are ruining *me* ? That you are ruining the husbands of these ladies, who are weak enough to listen to your absurdities ? That you are reducing whole families to poverty ?"

And without awaiting any rejoinder from the affrighted milliner, he seized her by the arm, and put her out of the room.

Madame Lesueur, a celebrated lace-maker who was patronised by the Empress, had received from the Princess Pauline Borghèse a large order which, among other articles, comprised a dress for which she had her-

self given the design, while the remainder had also been executed in strict conformity with her directions; the price of the whole amounting to about thirty thousand francs. When, however, Madame Lesueur, expecting to receive not only the value of the merchandise, but also the compliments of Her Imperial Highness upon the perfection with which she had completed her task, announced that she was ready to deliver the several articles to their intended owner, the princess had changed her mind.

Madame Lesueur expostulated, and entreated Her Highness to explain the cause which had induced her to decline fulfilling her contract; but the imperious Pauline would not condescend to be questioned, and desired that the subject might never again be mentioned in her presence. It was enough that she no longer required what she had ordered; and, as a matter of course, Madame Lesueur had only to state that she had herself designed the patterns in order to dispose of everything without the smallest difficulty.

In vain did the mortified and disappointed lace-maker endeavor by every means in her power to induce the princess to reconsider her refusal; all her representations were unavailing; when, feeling justly aggrieved, she caused the transaction to be mentioned to Josephine; who having examined the laces, and convinced herself that the price demanded for them was by no means exorbitant, was compelled to admit that the affair, should it be made public, would be very discreditable to her sister-in-law; and not knowing how otherwise to hush the matter up, she at length resolved to explain it to Napoleon, and to leave it to his decision.

Always interested by similar details, the Emperor in his turn closely examined all the contents of Madame Lesueur's cases, article by article, exclaiming from time to time: "How admirably they work in France! It is my duty to encourage such a trade as this! Pauline is wrong—very wrong. Nothing can be more perfect."

The result was that Napoleon paid the bill, and took possession of the laces, which he distributed among the ladies of the court.

Nor was he less placable as regarded the liabilities of his wife, when he had once recovered from his first fit of anger; and so well aware was Josephine of the fact, that she never hesitated to gratify her love of splendor at the expense of her prudence; although after her divorce she appeared to care rather for the possession, than the exhibition, of her magnificent jewels. Only upon one occasion did the Emperor refuse to sanction a purchase which she had made, but in that instance he did so resolutely.

It was a short period before the commencement of the Russian campaign; when Josephine, having learnt from one of her ladies that Nitot had just completed for one of the Oriental Potentates the most extraordinary suit of diamonds ever seen, she expressed her wish to examine them; and they were accordingly taken to the palace by the court-jeweller, and submitted to her inspection. Never, despite all the costly presents of which she had been the recipient from the several crowned heads of Europe, had she looked upon anything so gorgeous; and while she was energetically expressing her admiration, and even fastening the flashing gems upon her neck and arms, Nitot said bitterly:—

“Your Majesty judges with your usual discrimination. Even Paris sees such jewels for the first time; and yet, Madame, I have been apprised that my illustrious employer has changed his mind, before he has given himself an opportunity of estimating my skill and care in the arrangement of these precious gems; and that I am at liberty to dispose of the *parure* should I be fortunate enough to find a purchaser.”

“What say you, Monsieur?” exclaimed Josephine eagerly, as she placed the diadem upon her brow, and gazed complacently at the reflection of her own image in the tall mirror before which she was standing; “do I understand that you are authorised to part with these ornaments?”

“I am, Madame.”

“At what price?” she asked, almost breathless from excitement.

“For eight hundred thousand francs, Your Majesty; and they are richly worth ten,” was the reply.

“They are mine, Monsieur;” said Josephine, as with the assistance of Madame de Chevreuse and the jeweller she replaced them in the caskets; “the Emperor will sign you a receipt from Petersburg.”

Monsieur Nitot, thus virtually dismissed, made his obeisance and withdrew, leaving the diamonds in the possession of the Empress; but Napoleon had scarcely returned from Fontainebleau when one of his palace spies informed him of the whole transaction; and he forthwith proceeded to the apartments of his wife, and desired her to produce her morning purchase. Josephine was very reluctantly compelled to obey; and, as was his usual habit on such occasions, Napoleon carefully scrutinised the jewels.

“Your taste is good, Madame; very good;” he said gravely, as she hung upon his shoulder with one of her most winning smiles; “but you may perhaps remember what I once wrote to you from Italy—that I was a man of strong and decided purpose, while nature had only created you out of gauze and laces. Was I wrong in so judging of us both? What is the price of these pretty playthings?”

The reply to this question was whispered rather than spoken.

“Eight hundred thousand francs!” echoed the Emperor sarcastically; “By no means a bad commencement wherewith to feed and clothe my soldiers. Duroc—”

The Grand-Marshal of the palace advanced a pace or two.

“I confide these jewels to your care. Let them be restored to Nitot without the loss of a moment; and tell Bourrienne that I shall immediately be with him in my cabinet.”

There was naturally no appeal from so decided a command; and the mortified Empress felt that she had looked her last upon the coveted diamonds.

Scarcely, however, had she retired to la Malmaison, after her divorce, than Napoleon, aware that he could offer no better consolation to her grief, than by enabling her to indulge in her cherished habit of expenditure, paid her a visit, during which he presented to her a hundred thousand francs to embellish her house and grounds; two hundred thousand to purchase the adjoining estate of Boispreau, in order that she might enlarge her park; and one million in advance of her income of

three millions, to enable her to discharge her debts; together with six hundred thousand francs which he had left in his bureau at la Malmaison to provide her plate and linen; thus proving that although he had, while she shared his throne, found it expedient to limit her love of outlay, he was quite prepared to evince his sense of the dignity of her position as his divorced wife, by enabling her to maintain it with all fitting splendor.

A sublime exhibition of egotism which was justly estimated by the many; while it was extolled as the most admirable generosity by the few who were content to read no more than was written down for them!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DIVORCE.

DURING the absence of Napoleon at Erfurth, where he was met by the Emperor Alexander of Russia, the Queen of Westphalia, the Duchess of Weimar, the Kings of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Westphalia, and Saxony; the Grand-duke Constantine, the Prince-Primate, Prince William of Prussia, the Duke of Oldenburg, the Prince of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and the Princes of Neufchâtel and Benevento, and entertained by the Duke of Weimar in the most splendid manner, Josephine retired to la Malmaison. Rumors had already reached her, to which, although they wrung her heart,

she lent an eager ear ; while she, moreover, questioned all the members of her household in turn, upon the subject of the anticipated divorce, with a pertinacity which compelled them, however reluctantly, to admit that they were not altogether ignorant such a question had been mooted. On each of these occasions her depression and anxiety increased ; and while she passionately declared at times that such a project was impossible, at others she locked herself into her apartment to hide the bitter tears forced from her by an apprehension which was only too well-founded.

Among her most confidential friends was the Marquis d'A——, to whom we are indebted for the account of an interview which reveals how deeply both her woman-love and her woman-pride were wounded by the prospect before her.

As I had the honor of being one of His Majesty's Chamberlains—said our informant—I was, as a natural consequence, a privileged visitor to la Malmaison, where I constantly presented myself to pay my respects to my Imperial Mistress ; who, like Napoleon himself, always graciously welcomed a member of the *noblesse de la vieille souche*. Josephine was, moreover, aware that by accepting office under the Emperor I had offended my family, and exposed myself to the sarcasms and reproaches of the Faubourg St. Germain ; and she consequently treated me on all occasions with a distinction to which I was quite conscious that my mere personal merits could not have entitled me.

One morning as she rose from breakfast, she did me the honor of taking my arm ; and passing through the glass-doors of the salon into the grounds, she turned

towards the conservatories, which at that period were unequalled in France, and upon which she had expended enormous sums of money. The Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld, her Mistress-of-the-Robes, being slightly indisposed, was not in attendance; and we were consequently accompanied only by a lady-in-waiting, and one of Josephine's own chamberlains who, as there chanced to be a mutual attraction, by no means interfered with the privacy of the interview which the Empress had evidently been anxious to secure; and after one or two furtive glances, which sufficed to convince her that such was the case, the Empress abruptly asked me what news the Faubourg St. Germain had received from Erfurth.

"None, Madame," was my reply.

"Are they not employed in discussing my divorce?" she again demanded.

At this unexpected inquiry I actually shrank; I knew not what to reply; how could I torture her generous spirit by avowing that I had heard the subject coldly argued, and the result which she so much dreaded declared to be inevitable? The position was a painful one; but fearing that my continued silence might betray me, I contrived to stammer out:

"Nay, Madame, that is a question which I cannot answer, as I am not acquainted with either madmen, fools, or traitors."

"And yet they are not wanting in your noble faubourg;" she said somewhat bitterly; "if they alone are occupied in conspiring my ruin. We have now been acquainted a long time, M. d'A——; do not disguise the truth, but deal frankly with me. The infor-

mation that I have received is only too well authenticated. The great ambition of the Faubourg St. Germain is to induce the Emperor to form a second marriage. The Princess Amelia of Saxony* has been proposed to him, but I fear nothing from her. My husband would scarcely feel flattered by an alliance with a family, which, however august it may be, still does not occupy the first rank in Europe. To satisfy his ambition he must obtain either an Arch-duchess of Austria, or a Grand-duchess of Russia."

"I entreat of you, Madame;" I said hurriedly; "to banish all such painful imaginations; the Emperor loves you tenderly; he sees in you his good genius, the star of his prosperity; and rely on it that, this being the case, he will not consent to immolate at once his public and his private happiness."

"Ah, *Monsieur*;" murmured Josephine, as the ready tears sprang to her eyes: "Why was I not ordained to give an heir to France! To whom will he now bequeathe the crowns that he has conquered? I flattered myself for a time that Eugène—but no, my mother-heart misled me. The son of Louis is already in his grave; and, moreover, Napoleon will accept no adopted successor; nor is this conviction the only one which compels me to believe in my misfortunes. Fouché detests me; and he has his iron hand upon the wheel. Only yesterday, with the cold malice of a demon, he endeavored to persuade me myself to propose a divorce, which he well knows will, come when it may, prove my death-warrant."

As the agitated Empress informed me of this fact, I

* She subsequently became the wife of Ferdinand VII.

became more ill at ease than ever ; and would gladly have flung off the pressure of the delicate hand which was resting on my arm, and made my escape at once. Little did those who envied me my happiness at that moment suspect how dearly it was purchased !

Discretion, as I well knew, was not one of the virtues of the charming creole ; and I feared to utter a word lest she should, in a moment of excitement, repeat any remark that I might venture to make. She did not, however, appear conscious of the discourtesy ; but continued, after the pause of a few seconds, to enforce upon me that she had ample cause for her forebodings, and to entreat that I would hide nothing from her ; above all, she desired me to question such of my friends as had accompanied the Emperor to Erfurth, immediately on their return to Paris. Blinded at once by fear and passion, she forgot that nothing transpired in the salons of Napoleon which had passed in his private cabinet ; but she, nevertheless, evinced wonderful perspicacity in her selection of the individuals to whom she desired me to address myself for the information she required. The refusal of the Emperor to allow her to accompany him to Erfurth had mortified her beyond measure, as she at once inferred that he did not wish her to be seen by Alexander ; and upon this point she dwelt with a pertinacity which convinced me that, endeavor as she might to delude herself, the fatal truth was only too apparent to her.

A few days after this painful conversation. I was greatly surprised to receive an invitation from Fouché to breakfast with him on the following morning. We had never been on terms of intimacy ; I went to his

house, as I did to those of all the other Ministers, two or three times during the year ; but rather in my official capacity than as a private individual, and there our acquaintance terminated, if I except the ceremonious courtesies which we exchanged when we met in public. An invitation to breakfast was consequently what I had never anticipated, implying as it did an amount of friendship and even confidence, which had never existed between us. Nevertheless, as the Duke d'Otranto was not one accustomed to meet with any opposition to his will, or to pardon it should it ever occur, I was careful to present myself at his hôtel at the hour indicated.

The party was a small one, comprising only five persons, including Fouché and myself. Satisfied that he had some motive for his civility, I determined to observe the greatest caution, and neither by word nor look to evince any consciousness that I was more than a commonplace guest ; while on his side, the Minister avoided all political subjects ; affected to be in high spirits ; and throughout the repast entertained us with anecdotes of his adventures during the period when he was a professor at the College of July.

On the termination of the meal, the three other visitors took their leave ; and it was not without some misgivings that I found myself alone with Fouché.

“M. le Marquis ;” he said abruptly and in a low voice, before I had time to follow their example ; “you are attached to the service of His Majesty. I know what he may expect from you, and the career which he can open to your ambition. You have now an opportunity of proving your devotion to his person, for which

I am prepared to assure you that he will not show himself ungrateful."

I bowed in reply; and the astute Police-Minister continued:—

"Doubtlessly the Emperor himself, and consequently his glory and the future prosperity of his reign, are dear to you?"

"I trust," was my rejoinder; "that I have already convinced His Majesty of that fact."

"I am well aware that such is the case," said Fouché, with as courteous a smile as he could summon to his lips; "and it is therefore, Monsieur, that I now address myself to you. We are not about to indulge in any child's play on this occasion; and you must be cautious. We have arrived at an inevitable, a momentous, and an important crisis; what we are about to undertake might have been awhile delayed, it is true, but it should be our business to prevent that delay; as the final result, sooner or later, must be the same; that result, M. le Marquis, will revolutionise the palace, but the interests of the Emperor and the Empire alike enforce it."

It was not the habit of the Duke d'Otranto to overlay his meaning with words; and I had necessarily little difficulty, as I listened to this verbose preface, in deciding that he found considerable difficulty in approaching the real subject-matter of his communication. I would not, however, afford him the slightest assistance; I simply repeated my anxiety to be useful to my sovereign, and to prove myself worthy of his continued confidence; exhibited no anxiety to ascertain the meaning of my companion; and having finally

convinced him that I was thoroughly on the defensive, and that he could expect no help from me, he at once determined to pass the Rubicon.

“Monsieur,” he pursued sententiously; “our institutions, our relative positions, and our dignity as a nation, are all attached to the person, and depend on the acts of the Emperor. Should he die to-day all that he has hitherto effected would die with him; and we should only walk upon the fragments of the ruin in which he would be buried. One hope of escape from such a fate alone is left to us; Napoleon must live again in his posterity; he must contract a second marriage, and bequeathe an heir to the throne and glory of France. Do you not agree with me? Answer me frankly—I have acquired the right to demand this from the confidence which I have evinced in you.”

Never had I been placed in so onerous a position? Had I experienced an insult I could have resented and avenged it; but how could I declare between the Emperor, from whom I had never experienced anything save kindness and consideration, and the heart-broken Josephine, who had so recently honored me by a confidence which, painful as it was, appeared to me sacred? I saw that the keen and cat-like eye of Fouché was upon me; and I was preparing once more an evasive reply, when he impatiently continued:—

“I have now told you, M. le Marquis, what are my own feelings upon this question; and I beg to add that they are also those of the Emperor. The divorce is decided on. As regards yourself I have, therefore, only to say that His Majesty depends upon you to prepare the Empress for this painful sacrifice. She will ques-

tion you on the subject—I will take care that she shall be advised to do so—I have already dictated your reply; and you have consequently only to remember that, should you fail to obey my instructions, you will be wanting still more in your duty to your Imperial master.”

As I still hesitated to pledge myself to so ungracious a task, he was compelled to speak even more openly; and I became at length so perfectly convinced that it was indeed the will of Napoleon that I should take upon myself the onerous mission which was thus forced upon me, that I had eventually no alternative save to promise the Minister that I would comply with his orders.

Fouché, therefore, having assured me of the perfect confidence with which he relied upon the pledge that I had given, threw off his sententiousness, and conversed more freely; but he was, nevertheless, cautious not to allow me to suppose that the new Empress had been already selected. I did not, however, at this stage of the affair, require any further enlightenment. I remembered what had occurred at Vienna, when I visited that capital before the campaign of Austerlitz; and I did not for a moment doubt that Napoleon had even then desired an alliance with the house of Hapsburg.

But what Austrian princess could he at that period have married? Marie-Louise was only fourteen years of age; when, even supposing that it was question of her, and that (in 1809) Austria had proposed to bestow that princess upon him, it had required no less than two unsuccessful wars to induce the concession. What a

humiliating page in the life of a descendant of Rodolph of Hapsburg, and in the history of the proud house of Lorraine!

From that day I was always ill at ease in the presence of Josephine; and when I found myself, as would occasionally occur, almost alone with her, I trembled lest she should once more resume the fatal subject which was now ever present to my thoughts. I had been warned that she would be urged to question me; and the principal business of my life had now become how to evade her confidence. Never in my life had I so shrunk before any trial; but I knew that, present itself when it might, it must be undergone, as I dared not provoke the distrust of so formidable an enemy as the Duke d'Otranto.

Shrink as we will, however; resolve as we may; we are, after all, the slaves of circumstance; and not even our moral cowardice will avail us when our work, whether for good or for evil, is to be done; and so it chanced with me. I had exerted all my diplomacy; I had exercised all my ingenuity; and I had begun to believe that my agency was no longer considered necessary; when one morning a virtuous and honorable man, the father of a large family, and for whom I had long felt a sincere esteem, called upon me to ask my assistance. Unforeseen difficulties had multiplied upon him; and at length, seeing his children perishing for want, he had resolved to confide his misery to my friendly sympathy. My first impulse was naturally to open my desk.

“Close it again;” he said, sinking upon a seat; “we have been friends for years. I cannot borrow what I

may never perchance be able to repay, and thus lose both your regard and my own self-respect. I am here simply to request that you will present this petition to the Empress. I am not unknown to her, and she will feel for me."

Poor fellow ! had he only known with what gratitude I should have seen him accept all that I was enabled to offer, and to exempt me from the trial to which I intuitively felt that I was about to be exposed, he would have returned to his squalid home a happier and a richer man ; but as I could not explain to him how I was circumstanced, and dared not incur the risk of being suspected of a want of sympathy in his misfortunes, I pledged myself to present the petition ; and I accordingly lost no time after he had left me in requesting of Madame de la Rochefoucauld that she would solicit for me the favor of an audience. This I could have obtained without her intermission ; but, aware of the susceptibility of the lady, and quite unsuspecting of the treachery and ingratitude which she would ultimately exhibit towards her indulgent and unhappy mistress, I considered it more courteous not to ignore her official privileges.

The desired audience was accorded for the following day ; but when I entered the presence of the Empress, gracious as she was, I could not rally my spirits. I felt that the hour of trial was come at last. I presented the petition, strengthening as well as I could, the entreaties of the supplicant ; and as no one ever applied to Josephine in vain, I soon found myself in possession of a considerable sum in trust for my poor friend.

" You understand, M. le Marquis ;" said the gracious

donor in a faltering voice—for she had not been able to read the sad statement of his sufferings without emotion—“that this is intended as a mere temporary assistance for the unfortunate gentleman. I will, to-morrow, apply to the War Minister, as he must be permanently provided for.”

I need scarcely say that she redeemed her pledge; and that the petitioner soon found himself in possession of a good place under government.

Delighted at my success I was impatiently awaiting my dismissal, when, to my great discomfiture, I discovered that Josephine had no intention of allowing me to withdraw. On the contrary, she conversed with me on the commonplace topics of the day; digressed to the gossip of the court; and finally, by an easy transition, arrived at the dreaded subject.

“Well;” she said; “and now tell me, M. le Marquis, what do you know about the marriage of the Emperor?”

“A great deal, and yet in point of fact, very little, Madame;” was my constrained reply; “people talk promiscuously of one of His Majesty’s nieces, of the Queen of Etruria, of the sister of the Emperor Alexander, and of the daughter of the Emperor of Germany.”

“Ha!” she exclaimed, drawing a long breath, as though she had received a second blow—“Ha! they talk of all these! His niece? No, no; Napoleon respects himself too much to marry so near a relative. The Queen of Etruria! Well, well; we will say no more of her—we have only to remember how jealous the Emperor has shown himself since his accession, of the honor of his court, to be satisfied that Marie Louise

of Spain will never share his throne. Would that I could feel as happy with regard to the two others—” And burying her face in the cushions of the sofa upon which she sat, she gave free course to her tears. Suddenly she raised her head, and sweeping aside her disordered ringlets, she said with flashing eyes: “So then, no one appears to object to this divorce? No one cares to remember that the little good which it has been in my power to do I have done?”

“Nothing is so common as ingratitude, Madame;” I replied in a low voice, deeply moved by the sight of her emotion.

“And you, Monsieur—you who know me as I am—the woman as well as the Empress—what think you of the justice of the fate which awaits me?”

“In the presence of my Empress;” was my troubled rejoinder; “I can only express my perfect devotion to her cause.”

“I understand you, Monsieur;” said Josephine; “I have breathed the atmosphere of a court long enough to appreciate the evasions which reply to a simple question by empty flattery. In my absence you adopt the opinion of the Emperor.”

“Madame;” I retorted respectfully, but resolutely; “why should you do me such injustice? Do I seek to injure Your Majesty when I am compelled to concede that the most stringent interests of the Emperor compel him to establish his power upon a solid foundation? Reflect, Madame, I beseech you, in justice to your august husband, and even in justice to myself, since you have done me the honor to confer with me upon this painful topic, that the Emperor of the French, great

and powerful as he is, stands alone. He created the empire, which has consequently no antecedents; and should he leave no natural and legitimate successor, it must crumble into dust. An hereditary monarchy has a hold upon a nation, but in his case this has still to be secured. Suffer me to convince you that it is this conviction alone which has driven His Majesty to dream of a second marriage. You have possessed his heart; the Empire demands his support; and although I entreat you to believe, Madame, that if my single voice could keep you on the throne for ever, France would never know another mistress, I am unfortunately alone amid a crowd of councillors who urge far different views upon the Emperor. It is for France that they demand the sacrifice of his dearest and most cherished affections; and Your Majesty well knows what it is to appeal to Napoleon in the name of France!—of the country which he has rescued from anarchy, and made the law-giver of Europe! While *I* think only of Your Majesty, *they* refuse to recognise the claim of the woman, and look only to the duty of the Empress; and thus, Madame, confining themselves to merely political considerations, they declare that you would immortalise yourself did you possess sufficient moral courage to sacrifice your personal affections to the glory of the Empire.”

Poor Josephine, whose sobs rendered her unable to reply, dismissed me by a gesture; and as I left the room, I saw her fall back upon her cushions in an agony of grief.

So ended one of the most painful hours of my life; and most thankful did I subsequently feel that she

never again alluded to the subject in my presence. When I informed Fouché of what had passed between the Empress and myself; "So far, so good;" he replied (and I repeat his words *verbatim*), "another turn of the wheel, and we shall have a colony of little Napoleons?"

When, as we have shown, the most confidential friends of the poor victim of a selfish policy in their turn abandoned her cause, it is needless to say that the adherents of Napoleon himself had no sympathy to waste upon her sorrows. The stability of the Imperial dynasty was their own corner-stone of prosperity; and the higher and holier feelings of human nature have nothing in common with hollow vanity and grasping ambition. But however such might be the case with those about him, and however lightly they might overlook the means in their anxiety to secure the end, the Emperor was very far from being equally at his ease. It is true that the question of the divorce was settled, but the new bride was not yet secured; and the man who aspired to sovereign rule over all the continental nations had already been taught to understand that, however he might by his arms have cowed the crowned heads which even yet reluctantly admitted his fellowship, they were still far from considering him as one of themselves, and treating with him on such a project as that which he now meditated upon equal terms.

On one occasion, when he was closeted with Regnaud de Saint-John-d'Angely, at Fontainebleau, where they were discussing some important public measures requiring the closest and most careful consideration, Napoleon, absent, restless, and gloomy—pacing the

room from end to end, occasionally opening and shutting his snuff-box, and from time to time cutting away a fragment of the chair or table beside which he chanced to be passing at the moment, with his pen-knife—suddenly paused, and addressing his *quasi*-Minister, who was, moreover, possessed of his entire confidence, he said, impatiently :—

“ Enough. Do not pursue the subject, for I have not for the last five minutes heard a single sentence that you have uttered ; and it is not my custom to decide on important matters without a clear comprehension of their nature. Lock up your papers until to-morrow, and we will discuss a more serious subject. Count, I must marry.”

“ Marry, Sire !” echoed his companion ; “ why, are you not married ?”

“ To the satisfaction of my own heart, I am so ;” was the reply ; “ but as regards the happiness of France, such is not the case. I cannot bequeathe my crown to one of the collateral branches of my family. The Empire would not accept one of my brothers, or even Murat as my successor ; and not twenty of my generals would consent to acknowledge Eugène, although I have publicly adopted him. I cannot contemplate without a shudder the intestinal convulsion which my death, under such circumstances, would be sure to cause ; and the evil must be remedied while there is yet time. A son of my own would consolidate my power ; rally all parties ; reconcile all opinions. No one could contest his right to reign ; and I should die assured that the prosperity of France would not be endangered.”

“It is undeniable, Sire;” said Count Regneaud; “that a numerous posterity invariably gives stability to every throne.”

“All Europe thinks as you do, *Monsieur* ;” was the complacent rejoinder; “not a day passes but my divorce is a subject of conversation. As regards the divorce itself, nothing can be more easily accomplished. My will is law; and none will dare to dispute it. Both civil and religious obstacles must yield to reasons of State. But will my second marriage be as readily arranged? There are, upon this question, two individuals to be consulted—the one who makes the claim, and the other who admits it.”

“The Emperor of the French;” said Saint-Jean-d’Angely with a quiet smile; “need be under no apprehension that any mother, be her rank what it may, will refuse to him the hand of her daughter.”

“You are in error;” gravely replied Napoleon; “for me there are but two suitable alliances—but two Princesses with whom I feel disposed to share my throne. One of these has already been offered to me; but, as regards the second, I have met with a vexatious resistance on the part of the mother. You look astonished; and yet it is even as I say. When I was at Vienna—at Schoenbrunn—the Prince von Lichtenstein waited upon me to assure me of his loyalty and attachment. He is a man of sound sense and ripe judgment—a profound diplomatist, but withal thoroughly honest. He is warmly attached to the House of Hapsbourg, but he still admitted without hesitation to me that I had raised myself far above all the other monarchs of Europe; and that no continental nation could dispute

my supremacy. 'Nevertheless, Sire;' he added; 'your power, immense as it is, is fragile. You have no heir to your greatness.'

"True, prince;" I retorted; "my present marriage might be annulled, for I will not affect to misunderstand your meaning; but even were it so, where should I find a woman of sufficient rank to succeed the present Empress?"

"'Sire;' he said, without the hesitation of a moment; 'Pompey, by merely stamping upon the earth, could call up legions; and a single word from Your Imperial Majesty would equally suffice to secure to you such a wife as would be worthy to share your throne.'

"Courteous, but idle words, prince;" I replied; "except in one case. Am I to understand that you have any proposition to make to me?"

"'Sire, I am authorised to declare that no request of Your Majesty would be refused;' was his rejoinder—At that moment," pursued Napoleon; "I was standing opposite the fine portrait of the Archduchess Marie Louise which hangs in the great saloon of Schoenbrunn; and instinctively I raised my eyes to the picture. It was full of grace, sweetness, and modesty; and my resolution was taken at once. I changed the subject of conversation, and my visitor took his leave. Peace was concluded upon less stringent terms than I had previously contemplated; and I returned to Paris. One of my ministers had, meanwhile—convinced that the welfare of France depended upon my forming a second marriage—been at work yonder—in the far north—" Napoleon spoke slowly and bitterly; "and what think you was the result? I will tell you—a refusal—yes,

Monsieur, a refusal! To ME. I could not believe the fact; and I determined to have a frank explanation with the Czar. His reply was full of protestations of attachment to my person, of admiration, and of friendship; words, in short—words—but through all this verbiage I detected that he was acting under the insolent authority of his mother, and would not have been sorry to replace his sister by his own daughter. I was not his dupe, and I told him so; upon which Kourakin wrote to assure me that I had misinterpreted the expressions of Alexander; who, although he had certainly acknowledged the repugnance of his mother to the alliance, by no means felt himself bound to yield to it; and that consequently, if I would accord to the Grand Duchess the free exercise of her religion, there would be no further obstacle to our marriage.”

“In that case, Sire;” exclaimed the Count; “I do not see that you could form a more eligible alliance.”

“It was a snare, Monsieur;” frowned the Emperor; “Were Alexander to accept a princess of my blood, would he not compel her to join the Greek Church? Is not my crown at least as glorious as his own? As to the faith professed by my wife, I confess that I should personally care little upon the subject, but the dignity of the Empire requires that she should be a Catholic. They know this in Russia, and they thus veiled a resolute refusal under a religious scruple. However, the Gordian knot must be cut. To-morrow a privy council will be held; you will attend; and I trust, that when the question is discussed, as you know my wishes, you will act accordingly.”

The council to which Napoleon alluded was followed

by several others, in which the same subject was debated; and where Saint-Jean-d'Angely amply justified the confidence reposed in him by the Emperor. Cambacérés vehemently opposed the idea of an Austrian alliance, but he stood alone; and finally Napoleon convened the council, satisfied that he should be enabled to overbear all obstacles.

While these solemn conferences were taking place at Fontainebleau all was silence and sadness at the Tuileries; where Josephine, suspicious of the truth, but as yet uncertain as to her fate, spent the long weary time in tears.

She was one day thus mournfully occupied when, at an earlier hour than the etiquette of the court prescribed for visitors, the Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld entered her private apartment with more than her habitual solemnity of bearing, and announced to the Empress that the Duke d'Otranto solicited an audience. At the hated name of Fouché, Josephine shuddered, and her first impulse was to refuse to receive him; but fearing, as was actually the case, that he bore a message from the Emperor, she recalled her order of dismissal, and desired her lady-in-waiting to admit him.

Never had the Duke d'Otranto approached his Imperial mistress with so much humility; never had he appeared so submissive, or so devoted. Quite aware that she was peculiarly vulnerable to flattery, he dilated on her grace, her goodness, and her numerous virtues; and declared his conviction of the perfect happiness for which the Emperor was indebted to her affection; then suddenly, as he saw the glow of gratified feeling suffuse the brow and bosom of his victim, and the gleam of

reawakened hope flash from her eyes, he exclaimed reproachfully:—

“And such being the case, why, Madame, I would venture to ask, have you voluntarily renounced the exercise of so proud, so noble a prerogative as that of lightening by your attachment and tenderness the cares of your august husband; and of embellishing by your presence the court of which you are the brightest ornament?”

“I, Monsieur!” said Josephine, startled into renewed apprehension; “I renounce nothing—nothing—remember this—at least—” she added after an instant’s pause, —“at least voluntarily.”

“I thought I had heard—” softly rejoined the astute Police-Minister; “Indeed I was told—I must have misunderstood—”

“Misunderstood what?” asked the Empress; “Explain yourself, Monsieur. What is the meaning of your extraordinary manner?”

“Madame;” said Fouché; “since you desire to know my meaning, I am bound to inform you that certain individuals who are honored by the confidence of Your Majesty, have assured me that,—thoroughly comprehending the necessity which there exists that the Emperor, for his own happiness and that of the nation, should have a son to whom he may bequeath his crown—you had resolved yourself to solicit a divorce. The report has spread throughout Paris; and it has already received the public sanction, even while it caused the most painful regret to blend with the enthusiastic admiration of a grateful people.”

“Enough, Monsieur le Duc;” said the Empress with

dignity ; “ and now I would be informed for my future guidance, whether the Emperor commissioned you to deal me this death-blow, or if you have gratuitously volunteered the barbarity which you are now perpetrating ? For once in your life I expect that you will speak frankly. Tell me the truth therefore, Monsieur, if you can do so without suffering too acutely from the effort.”

“ Since Your Majesty is pleased to resent my zeal so cruelly ;” replied Fouché ; “ I admit that I have received no direct mission from the Emperor ; but I know his sentiments, the tenderness which he feels for your person, and the anguish he will experience in wounding your heart.”

“ Once more I say enough, Monsieur !” exclaimed Josephine, revolted by his duplicity ; “ I can bear from him what I will not endure from your lips. I must request that you will retire.”

The duke, affecting to be overwhelmed by the anger of the soul-stricken woman whom he had so mercilessly tortured, obeyed with a profound salutation ; and, delighted to have broken the ice without committing the Emperor, he hastened to Fontainebleau to report the result of his audience.

Almost overwhelmed by the constantly recurring mortifications to which she was suddenly subjected, the unfortunate Empress resolved to terminate all further suspense by having that very evening an explanation with Napoleon.

It was in vain that her daughter had assured her three days previously that the divorce was openly discussed by the courtiers ; and that she had even heard

it alluded to by the Emperor himself ; Josephine refused to believe in the reality of her misfortune. She mingled her tears with those of Hortense, but in her case they were the tears of exhaustion and of bitterness—not those of conviction. She spread before her the letters she had received in the first years of her marriage ; many of which, were they not well authenticated, might from their extravagance of expression be deemed apocryphal when we consider the hand by which they were written ; and as her eye ran over each, she constantly repeated :—

“No, no ; it is impossible. See how he loved me !”

By a singular chance the Imperial couple were to dine that day *en tête-à-tête*, and Josephine resolved to profit by so rare a circumstance ; for Napoleon had latterly become anxious to avoid finding himself alone with the woman whom he was about to immolate to his ambition, and was careful that either his mother, Queen Hortense, or the Princess Borghèse should at least be present when he received no other guests.

As the dinner was announced, their Majesties seated themselves in silence. The Empress wore a large white bonnet tied under the chin, which partially covered her face ; but she could not succeed in concealing from the attendants that her eyes were red and swollen with weeping, and that she had still great difficulty in restraining her tears. Not a sound was heard throughout the repast until Napoleon, addressing himself to Beausset, his *maître-d'hôtel*, inquired *if the day was fine*. Neither the one nor the other did more than taste the dishes which were successively presented to them ; and

the moment the service ceased the Emperor rose from the table, and was slowly followed by Josephine.

When coffee was served, Napoleon, contrary to his usual habit, which was to receive it from the Empress after she had sweetened it to his taste, took it himself from the salver, and by a gesture dismissed the page on duty. As a natural consequence all the other attendants retired likewise, but contented themselves by passing into the adjoining apartment, where they were soon absorbed in whispered comments upon the scene which they had just witnessed. Suddenly the shrieks of Josephine were heard from the saloon, and the usher of the presence was about to throw open the door, when he was held back by the prefect of the palace, who observed that should the Emperor require assistance he would, as a matter of course, summon them to his aid. An instant afterwards Napoleon appeared, and looking around him, said in an excited tone:—

“Enter, Beausset, and close the door behind you.”

As the prefect obeyed, he perceived Josephine extended on the carpet, weeping violently, and at intervals exclaiming:

“No!—it is my death-warrant; I shall never survive it.”

“Monsieur, are you strong enough to raise the Empress, and to carry her by the private staircase to her apartment?” asked Napoleon: “she requires the care of her women without loss of time.”

Surprised at so extraordinary a command, Beausset approached his Imperial Mistress, and raising her gently from the floor with the assistance of the Emperor, took her in his arms; and, preceded by Napoleon

carrying a flambeau, traversed a dark passage that led to the staircase by which he had been ordered to descend. On reaching the first step he discovered, however, that it was too narrow to admit the Empress in the position in which he held her, without risking an accident; when Napoleon immediately summoned a secretary who was in waiting at one of the doors of his private cabinet which opened on the landing, and giving him the light, desired him to go first, while he himself supported her legs on his arm, and the party cautiously moved forward until they reached the chamber of Josephine, where they laid her upon a couch; this done, Napoleon, seizing the bell-rope, rang violently until the entrance of her attendants, when he immediately withdrew into the ante-room, followed by Beausset. His agitation was excessive; and so thoroughly was he unnerved by what had occurred, that disregarding the fact that the prefect was not precisely the confidant he would have chosen in a calmer moment, he exclaimed:

“The interests of France and of my dynasty have forced a painful duty on me, Monsieur. The divorce which causes so much suffering to the Empress cannot be avoided. I was not prepared for the trial which I have just undergone, as the Queen of Holland at my request explained to her three days since the melancholy necessity of the step which I am about to take. I pity her with all my heart; but I thought she had more strength of mind, and would have striven against the exhibition of a grief which can, unfortunately, avail her nothing.”

Then, after the silence of a few seconds, he said abruptly:

“Send without loss of time for Corvisart, Queen Hortense, Cambacérès, and Fouché. Be silent as to what has occurred ; and I will meanwhile assure myself of the condition of the Empress.”

So saying, he returned to the chamber of Josephine, while Beausset hastened to perform his mission ; and, upon re-entering the saloon to reclaim his hat, which he had flung upon the floor when he raised the Empress, he informed the pages and ushers that Her Imperial Majesty had been seized with so violent a nervous attack, that it had created the greatest alarm in those by whom it was witnessed.

Napoleon was in error when believing that Hortense had communicated the cruel intelligence with which he had entrusted her, in the decided terms in which he had made it known to herself. The task was too difficult ; the heart of the daughter revolted at the duty imposed upon her ; she had done all that she had moral strength to do ; more, far more, than she had believed she should have found courage to undertake ; and then, half-wild with sorrow and with apprehension, she wrote to her brother Eugène, entreating him to hasten to Paris to support and comfort their heart-stricken mother. But even this appeal was vain ; for it was not until he received an official telegraphic summons that the Viceroy of Italy felt himself at liberty to proceed to Paris. There he alighted at the residence of his sister, who, throwing herself into his arms in an agony of grief, told him that he had arrived too late, for that the divorce was formally decided.

The meeting between the mother and her son was agonising to both. Josephine had hoped so much from

his influence; from the affection which Napoleon had displayed towards him in his official adoption; from the services which he had rendered to France; from his gallantry in the field; and from his uncontested popularity; while Eugène, on his side, devotedly attached to his sole surviving parent, had believed that when the fatal moment drew near, the Emperor would find it impossible to separate himself from her for ever. In his admiration of the General whom he had been desirous to emulate, he had forgotten that a man may possess every quality calculated to secure public admiration, and yet be destitute of a heart.

While these painful scenes were passing at the Tuileries, the political position of Napoleon was most brilliant. The successes of the last Austrian campaign had consolidated (as it was anticipated, for many years to come) the new league, known as the Confederation of the Rhine. The newly-created Sovereigns deemed the crisis a favorable one for offering their homage to their suzerain; and accordingly, unconscious of the domestic misery of the Imperial family, they hastened to assemble in Paris. As it was impossible to avoid receiving these illustrious guests, Josephine was compelled to struggle against her despair, and to assume an appearance of dignified composure very foreign to her real feelings; a sacrifice enhanced by the consciousness that, being unsuspected, it could elicit no sympathy.

The magnificence of the fêtes given in Paris to the royal visitors was almost fabulous, but we will particularly allude only to one—the last at which the unhappy Josephine appeared in public as Empress of the French. Napoleon had preserved the habit of accepting a fête

at the Hôtel-de-Ville on each anniversary of the battle of Austerlitz, which was also that of his coronation; and on the present occasion, the city of Paris, in honor of the foreign sovereigns, caused the concert and ball which had hitherto comprised the entertainment, to be preceded by a sumptuous banquet.

The Emperor was attired with unwonted splendor in purple velvet, over which was thrown the Imperial mantle embroidered with golden bees, and lined with ermine, while his hat, *à la Henri IV.*, was nearly covered by a chain composed of the finest diamonds of the crown, with the exception of the *regent*, which decorated the hilt of his state-sword. Opposite to him sat the Empress.

The same memorable day which had seen her ascend a throne was to witness, after the lapse of a few years, her final descent from it; and the victim was arrayed for the sacrifice. She wore a dress of sky-blue striped with gold, and embroidered with pearls; her purple mantle was richly ornamented with a bordering of emeralds, amethysts, topazes, and garnets; while her girdle, as well as her diadem, and the crown which was so soon to fall from the head by which it was borne so gracefully, were composed of enormous brilliants. Never before had she exhibited so much magnificence. All the newly-crowned Sovereigns who filled the table were, moreover, attired with a gorgeousness which rendered the *coup d'œil* one of extraordinary grandeur; nor were the great officers of the Imperial Household less splendid in their appearance.

The covers for the illustrious party were laid in the Banqueting Hall, in a semicircular recess; the great

officers of the household in their brilliant uniforms forming a background ; while the body of the spacious apartment was left open to the public, who, entering by one lateral door, passed along the front of the dais, and then retired by another directly opposite.

At the close of the banquet the Imperial and Royal guests proceeded to the ball-room, where their appearance was anxiously awaited by the principal personages of the court and city ; and here nothing could be more magical than the scene which presented itself. The noble apartment blazed with light, which was reflected by costly jewels, gleaming satins, and waving plumes. The Emperor, grave, stately, and almost stern, moved through the room, addressing a few words to such of the ladies as by their rank and station were entitled to anticipate the courtesy ; and he was followed by the Empress, who, pale, depressed, and wretched, could scarcely articulate a greeting. Her suffering, for truly it must have been one to enact the sovereign when she was already deposed, was not, however, of long duration. The quick eye of Napoleon soon detected that her strength must fail her, and at midnight he retired.

The last act of her Imperial existence had been played out ; and the unfortunate Josephine was at length enabled to give free vent to her misery. When she reached her own apartment she tore off the gorgeous trappings which had for hours weighed upon her so heavily, and lifted the diadem from her head with an assumption of relief which to those about her appeared feigned and unnatural ; and she had no sooner permitted them to arrange her sleeping-dress than she dismissed all her attendants.

On the night of the divorce a fearful storm broke over Paris; and such a deluge of rain fell, and was swept in compact sheets of water by the violence of the wind, that great apprehensions were entertained for the safety of the city. On the following morning the streets were strewn with shattered chimneys, broken glass, the roofs of houses, and shutters which had been blown from their hinges; while on the boulevards, and in the public gardens, especially those of the Tuileries, numbers of trees were uprooted, and lay upon the ground.

The Senate held at the Luxembourg at midday of the 16th to officially propose the divorce is matter of history; as is also the audience accorded on the following day at the Tuileries by Napoleon, to ratify its decision.

A short time after the arrival of the senators at the palace, they were introduced into the great cabinet of the Emperor, in which were seated the Imperial couple, the Kings of Holland, Westphalia, and Naples; Prince Eugène; and their Majesties the Queens of Spain, Holland, Westphalia, and Naples; *Madame-Mère*; and the Princess Pauline Borghèse.

The report of the proceedings of this eventful morning which was publicly promulgated, was very far from a correct one. Instead of delivering the calm, unembarrassed address which an audacious diplomacy attributed to the Empress, and which was in point of fact the composition of Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely, the spirit-bowed Josephine could not utter a syllable. In vain did she spread her fan before her face, she could conceal neither her sobs, nor the shivering which at intervals shook her whole

frame; and Cambacérès was compelled to guide her hand as she affixed her signature to the fatal document.

The poor Queen of Holland, who was little less overcome than her mother, looked almost in vain around her for consolation and support; for with the exception of the Queens of Spain and Westphalia, no one appeared to feel the slightest sympathy in her sorrow; while, on the contrary, she detected in several of Napoleon's relatives the unconcealed evidences of a satisfaction as ill-timed as it was ungenerous. The Kings of Holland and Naples behaved admirably; but Caroline and Pauline scarcely endeavored to control their triumphant exultation, and exchanged glances which were neither unobserved nor misinterpreted by those who intercepted them. Madame Bonaparte, meanwhile, sat cold and silent. She had never loved her step-daughter, and was too proud to feign what she did not feel.

Napoleon gave no other sign of emotion than the pertinacity with which he averted his eyes from the face of his almost convulsed victim; his voice was clear and steady, and his attitude firm. He was already looking beyond the troubled present into the brilliant future which was to behold him—the Corsican refugee and military adventurer—the husband of a daughter of the Cæsars!

At length all the necessary ceremonies had been observed; the irrevocable step had been taken; and as he rose from his seat, the children of Josephine hurried their mother from the room; while she struggled to suppress the evidences of her anguish, in order not to betray it to the throng of officials who crowded the state-apartments.

At midday on the morrow, after the night of tempest we have already described, and while Napoleon and his generals were reviewing the troops in the square of the Carrousel, she was seen, accompanied by her daughter, to enter her carriage, never more to return to the Tuileries.

“*A la Malmaison,*” shouted the mounted equerry—and thus finished for Josephine Tascher de la Pagerie the empty dream of greatness by which she had been so long beguiled.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF TALMA.

ONE of the most Herculean labors undertaken by Napoleon I. when he had succeeded in ascending the French throne was to cleanse his court of the vice by which those of the Directory and the Consulate had alike been defiled. An *index expurgatorius* had indeed been attempted at the Tuileries and la Malmaison ere he assumed the purple, but much still remained to be done when he had possessed himself of the reins of Empire on which he could not, while less than all-powerful, insist with the stringency required to effect his purpose.

Many of the misguided women whose names he had caused to be erased from the reception-list of the Empress, persisted in rendering themselves conspicuous

with certain fashionable actors, such as Ellevion, of the Italian Opera-house, and Henri, of the Vaudeville; and this disgraceful mania was carried to such a height that on one occasion the Marquise de B * * * * actually challenged a woman of the same rank as herself for having endeavored to supplant her in one of these disgraceful *liaisons*.

In the confusion of ranks consequent upon the political convulsions by which France had been mercilessly wrung for several years, and in the total subversion of society, provided that a woman were handsome she could aspire to whatever rank she pleased; and the natural result ensued; the moral principle was destroyed in both sexes; men bartered their very souls for power and gain; while women forgot to blush at the means employed to accomplish the ends of their ambition. Education, intellect, or accomplishments had ceased to attract; matter had usurped the place of mind; all was held cheaply, save that which immediately conduced to personal gratification either of the vanity or the senses. Vapid scandal; exaggerated and indecent fashions, wherein the leading beauties of the day appeared to have resigned to the sterner sex the tags and tinsel in which under the dynasty of the Bourbons they had delighted, and to prove with how much, in the article of clothing, they could dispense; theatrical representations devoid alike of talent and of modesty; the coarsest conversation, by which the ear was polluted and the nature hardened and debased; such were the deplorable resources of a large portion of those whom the seething cauldron of revolution had cast upon the surface of society. The theatre of Brunet

was the popular school of literature with the young men of fashion ; and nothing was a greater object of envy than the talent of repeating with ease and emphasis the gross double-meanings of the Jocrisses and the Cadet-Roussels.

The education of the young girls was little better, for there actually existed seminaries in Paris where they were taught the whole art and system of coquetry ; and where, on the occasion of a distribution of prizes, or any other local festival, groups of half-naked maidens executed ballets under the eyes of their parents and relatives, by whom their proficiency was applauded as though they had been paid *coryphées* of the opera.

No principle of religion was inculcated at these schools. It is true that rewards were no longer given to the unhappy young creatures who became mothers before they were wives, as had been the case under the Convention ; but placed between the Scylla and Charybdis of evil example and vicious education, it required more than ordinary virtue to escape the general infection of vice ; and even where the conduct remained pure, the mind was too often irretrievably contaminated.

In order to verify the fact of the foregone assertions, I will relate an anecdote which I derived from the suppressed memoirs of one of the Emperor's chamberlains ; who, being a man of taste and intellect, had cultivated the friendship of the great tragedian Talma, from whose own lips he heard the story.

Talma was still buried in sleep at eight o'clock one morning, when his servant awoke him with the announcement that a lady, very young and very pretty,

requested to see him immediately. It was either just before or just after the return of Bonaparte from Egypt, and at the period when the tragedian occupied apartments in the house of Vigier on the Quai Voltaire. Although his profession might be no patent of morality, he was essentially a man of honor and delicacy, and the proceeding offended his nice sense of propriety. He accordingly somewhat impatiently desired that the lady, be she who or what she might, should be informed that he was extremely sorry to appear uncourteous, but that it was impossible for him to receive her.

The valet executed his commission, but immediately returned to report that the visitor would not leave the house until her request had been complied with, and that she was weeping bitterly; upon which Talma, conjecturing that it must be some one in distress who came to ask his assistance, at once resolved to indulge her wish; and after instructing his servant to beg that she would wait for a few minutes in his breakfast-room, he hastily dressed himself, and joined his pertinacious guest.

His first question, when he found himself in the presence of an elegant and lovely girl of fifteen, richly dressed, and evidently belonging to the upper classes of society, was naturally as to the cause which had procured for him the honor of her visit; when she unhesitatingly replied that on the previous evening she had accompanied her parents to the theatre of the Republic, where she had seen him enact the part of Achilles; that she had lain awake the whole night in order to recall his image; that she loved him; and that, in short, not even the fear of death itself would have had power

to prevent her from seeking to win his love in return.

Flattered no doubt, both as an actor and as a man, at so singular an avowal, Talma nevertheless looked upon her with pity rather than passion, and attempted to impress her with the danger as well as the disgrace of the step which she had taken; but the juvenile rival of Iphigenia refused to listen to his arguments, and persisted in declaring that should she be separated from him her life would be valueless.

“But, my poor child;” said Talma; “you are not in the least aware of the position in which you have placed yourself. Come, come; return to your home and to your family; and think no more of me, save indeed it be to remember that I have enjoyed five minutes’ conversation with a young lady, whose beauty requires only the dignity of self-respect to render it perfect.”

“But I love you—”

“Nay, in that case;” replied the tragedian, anxious to inspire her with confidence; “I am afraid that your reasons are indeed resistless; and now tell me how you contrived to elude the vigilance of your mother, my little heroine.”

Delighted by the smile with which he looked down upon her, and the earnest tone in which he addressed her, his enamored visitor wiped away her tears, shook back the lustrous masses of dark hair that hung about her brow and shoulders, and hastened to gratify his curiosity. Her plan was so well laid as she left home, (upwards of an hour before she reached his house) in order to return to her school, that she had contrived to rid herself for a few moments of her mother’s waiting-

maid, to whose care she had been confided, and to make her escape; when, not knowing his address, she had procured it from the door-keeper of the theatre.

During their conversation, Talma found no difficulty in ascertaining who his fair visitor was, and where she resided. The name of her father was familiar to him as that of an individual who had enriched himself by army-contracts, and by speculating on the Stock-Exchange. He was also aware that the family lived in a very expensive manner; and that the gentleman, having devoted himself entirely to the pursuit of money, had left his establishment under the sole control of his wife; who, in her turn, was entirely absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure, and was ignorant of much that was going forward beneath her own roof.

As he reflected on these facts, the noble-minded tragedian felt his pity for the poor misguided girl grow into a warm and brotherly interest, and his plans were soon arranged. Having, at that time, no carriage of his own, he desired his servant to hire a hackney-coach, and to direct the driver to wait at the corner of the rue de Beaune; and on the return of his messenger he prevailed on the young lady to precede him to the vehicle, promising to rejoin her in a few moments, and to accompany her to the Champs Elysées, where he proposed that they should breakfast.

Enchanted by the project, his visitor at once complied; and Talma, equally pleased that he had by this precaution prevented her further compromising herself, soon followed; when having given his instructions to the coachman in a low voice, and desired his servant to mount the box, he took his seat beside the fair fugitive;

who, overcome at length by his arguments and representations, finally consented with great reluctance to have a last interview with her mother.

In obedience to the orders given, the coach stopped a few doors from the house of the young lady's parents; but her companion would not suffer her to alight until his valet had fulfilled the commission with which he was entrusted. Little had the thrice-happy girl, when tenderly reproaching the object of her admiration for his delay in not sooner hastening to her in the carriage, suspected in what manner he had employed the brief period of his absence, during which time he had in fact written a hurried note to her mother to entreat that she would immediately come to the spot, which his servant would point out, and reclaim her daughter.

The unfortunate woman, who had already been apprised by her waiting-maid of the disappearance of her child, and who was half-frantic with sorrow and alarm, instantly obeyed the summons; but on seeing Talma uttered a despairing shriek.

"Fear nothing, Madame," he said soothingly; "Mademoiselle was simply curious to ascertain if the Talma of every-day life resembled in any way the Achilles of the stage. That curiosity she has now satisfied; and I am delighted to place her once more in your arms."

Then, bowing profoundly to both ladies, he sprang into his modest vehicle, and drove off.

* * * * *

"And did you ever meet with your fair inamorata afterwards?" inquired Count d'A——.

"I did;" replied the tragedian; "on one solitary occasion at Erfurth, some eight years subsequent to the

event I have just related. She was then married to an officer of high rank in the Imperial Guard ; and I found on inquiry that she had become an amiable wife and mother."

Endeavor after that to prophesy the final career of a woman by her antecedents.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TWO EMPERORS.

"PEOPLE who do not reflect upon a Providence"—says the Count d'A——, in his suppressed memoirs—"are quite correct in declaring that all is chance in this world ; for, the conviction of that overruling Providence remaining unfelt and unacknowledged, it is certain that what they call 'chance' occasionally serves us better than the most clever combinations of our own ingenuity.

"One day—(I adopt his own words)—I really cannot explain wherefore, but I determined on going to the Tuileries considerably before the hour at which, as chamberlain to the Emperor, my services would be required. It was, in short, scarcely eight o'clock ; and I was pacing to and fro in perfect solitude the *salon d'honneur*, buried in thought, when a door suddenly opened, and I found myself in the presence of the Emperor. He looked more worn than I had ever before seen him, and by a gesture of the hand he

motioned me to approach. I obeyed, and he preceded me to his cabinet, which we had no sooner entered, than without any preamble, he said abruptly:—

“‘You speak German, I believe, Monsieur.’

“‘I do, Sir.’

“‘And Italian?’

“‘Both fluently.’

“‘That is well!’

“‘I am also acquainted with other European languages, such as Spanish and English; in fact I could travel throughout Europe without inconvenience on that score.’

“‘You are fortunate, M. le Comte;’ he remarked; ‘there is no education so practically useful as languages and mathematics. Do you know anything of mathematics?’

“‘But little, Sir. I have a smattering of geometry, trigonometry, and algebra; but I have not sufficiently studied the science to call myself a good mathematician.’

“‘It is not necessary that you should be so in order to execute the service which I am about to confide to you;’ was his reply; ‘What you have to do is this—return home, procure a good travelling-carriage—have you one?’

“‘Sir, I can secure one immediately.’

“‘No; that would involve delay;’ he said impatiently; ‘you shall have one of mine. You must start for Italy, and proceed to Milan, where the Viceroy will supply you with the means of entering Austria without betraying your identity. When you reach Vienna watch the movements of the Emperor; he frequently goes out

on foot, or in a plain calèche. Accost him boldly ; tell him that you come from me, and that you wish to speak to him without witnesses, in order that neither his ministers nor my own ambassador may be cognisant of the interview. If his reply should be in the negative, give him this letter, marked No. 1, in which I recognise you as my confidential envoy and agent ; when he must, as a matter of course, recognise your functions. In this case you will make no observation—answer no questions—but merely observe that your mission is terminated by the refusal of his Imperial Majesty to receive you a second time. If, on the contrary, he consents to do so, deliver to him the packet marked No. 2,—here it is—he will read it, and appoint a time for the interview. Then, and only then, I authorise you to open this third envelope, and to read the note which it contains, as well as the instructions, and other documents by which it is accompanied. Remember, Monsieur, that upon the success of your mysterious embassy will depend beyond all doubt the future prosperity of two great nations ; I will not add your own also, as that will be the natural consequence of having served my interests and those of France.’

“ I listened ;” continued the Count ; “ with deep and eager attention to the words of Napoleon. They opened up for me a career at once brilliant and flattering ; and I could scarcely believe that I was not the victim of an illusion. There could not, however, exist a doubt as to the reality of the scene. I thanked the Emperor for the honor which he conferred upon me by such a mark of confidence ; and assured him so earnestly that he should not find it misplaced, that he evidently gave credence to my words.

“ He then desired me to request leave of absence on the pretext of ill-health, and to ask a passport for Germany; directing me at the same time to inform my friends and my family that, should I derive as much benefit as I anticipated from the journey, my absence would probably be a prolonged one.

“ Nothing could be more feasible than such an assertion, as it was well-known that I was at that very time suffering severely from an annoyance of a private nature, to which I shall do no more than allude, as it is foreign to the subject; but it was with no small surprise that I discovered the Emperor to be fully aware of the circumstance.

“ When I had received my instructions, I was about to retire; but Napoleon, disregarding my salutation, approached his bureau, from which he took a portfolio full of bank bills on France, London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Vienna, and several other of the great cities of Germany.

“ ‘Take these;’ he said, holding them towards me; ‘I do not intend the expenses of your journey to be defrayed by any of the government offices; and it does not suit me that your progress should be hampered through want of funds. I have a last caution to give you. Beware, Monsieur, of the Count of Stadion, and above all of Colloredo; the latter is my personal enemy; he married a French emigrant, a poor fool who attempts, like the frog in the fable, to swell herself to greatness by seeking to declare herself my equal. If they propose to place you in communication with the Archduke Charles, the Prince of Lichtenstein, or even the Prince de Ligne, that will be a good sign; but be prudent and

firm, and endeavor to avoid the scrutiny of the Baron de Sumerarr, the Police Minister. In any case, you have a right to demand an official presentation; and you can do so should you consider it expedient.'

"At the termination of this long conversation, during which the waiting-room had become thronged with persons, either desirous of an audience with His Majesty, or awaiting his orders for the day, he declared his unwillingness that I should be observed quitting his cabinet, as so signal a favor, coupled with my hasty departure from France, could not fail, should it become known, to arouse the curiosity and the suspicions of those about him; a contingency which he was extremely anxious to avoid; observing that if ever the motive of a journey required to be kept secret, mine was most certainly that mission.

"I was quite bewildered, as I had not the most remote clue to its nature or purpose; but the Imperial word sufficed. That Napoleon was thoroughly in earnest was certain, and it consequently behoved me to be equally so; although I felt much as a man may be disposed to do who is about to pursue in the dark a path beset by snares and pitfalls. Nevertheless, however, I was full of hope and self-gratulation, for I knew the strength of the hand by which I had been guided into that path, and by which I should be supported amid its dangers; for what individual's fortune ever failed at that period when it was based upon the favor of Napoleon?

"I quitted the palace under the guidance of Roustan, who conducted me through a maze of secret passages; and I finally found myself at foot of the staircase in the pavilion of Flora. In what a different frame of

mind did I leave the Tuileries from that in which I had entered there only an hour or two previously. Then I was gloomy, depressed, and careless of the future; while as I pursued my homeward way I felt assured that a brilliant career was before me, and I already found myself secretly entrusted with a mission of which the importance was beyond all doubt.

“On what was really its nature I must be silent.”

[Subsequent events proved that the embassy of the count had for its object to request the hand of Marie Louise for Napoleon, and that it signally failed; which failure entailed a war with Austria, that rendered the Emperor Francis more complying, and ultimately placed the crown of France upon the brow of the young Archduchess.]

“I might;” pursued M. d’A——; “have gratified the curiosity of many whom I was anxious to oblige, had I revealed even a portion of what had passed between my Imperial master and myself; but in the first place my word was pledged, and in the next I was well aware that such a breach of confidence would soon be discovered by the Emperor, and punished as it deserved to be. Meanwhile the news of my sudden departure spread through the court circle, who attributed its haste to my anxiety regarding my health; but there were a few more astute personages who entertained considerable doubt that such was its real motive. Among others M. de Talleyrand was too keen-sighted to be so easily deceived.

“‘You have chosen a strange remedy, *mon cher comte*,’ he said, sarcastically, when I waited upon him on some business connected with my office, and inci-

dentally mentioned that I was about to leave Paris for a time; 'I had already been informed of your project; and I confess it appears to me that a residence at the Courts of Munich and Vienna is much less likely to restore your health and spirits than a visit to the baths of Baden or Tœplitz. I could have understood the probability of the one; but the presumed efficacy of the other is beyond my comprehension.'

"Nor was I more fortunate when I paid my parting respects to the Princess Hortense, who laughingly observed: 'all the world is talking of your illness, Monsieur, and of the extraordinary method by which you hope to overcome it. Your friends are unanimously of opinion that a course of highway travelling can scarcely be necessary, or likely to be efficacious.'

"'My friends, Madame la Princesse,' I replied gravely, 'are very kind to judge for me in such an emergency; and they are quite welcome to do so while I retain my liberty of action.'

"'From which Minister have you received your instructions?' she asked with an ambiguous smile.

"'I have not seen one of them upon the subject, Madame;' I said as composedly as before; 'Greatly requiring change to overcome a very painful trial, I requested the permission of His Imperial Majesty to travel for a few months, a favor which was accorded to me through the interposition of M. de Remusat; and I shall not see any of Their Excellencies until to-morrow, when I go to obtain from the Police-Minister the passport which I require, in order that it may afterwards be *visé* by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.'

"On the following day I proceeded to the office of

Fouché, who no sooner saw me enter than he exclaimed :—

“ ‘ We are then about to lose you, M. le Chamberlain. And you are going to run half over the world. I trust that we may all profit by your experiences, for rest assured that you will have plenty of adventures.’ ”

“ ‘ I shall endeavor to decrease their number by keeping myself in the background ;’ ” was my reply, for I was already upon my guard.

“ ‘ A notable resolution, no doubt ;’ ” pursued the Police-Minister ; ‘ only somewhat difficult of accomplishment. A chamberlain of the Emperor, entrusted with the negotiation of important business, is likely to become even more conspicuous by the very efforts which he makes to conceal his real purpose.’ ”

“ ‘ *Monseigneur* ;’ ” said I ; ‘ you are quite mistaken. I am about to travel for my own gratification alone ; and I trust that as a mere private individual I shall not be interfered with in any way.’ ”

“ ‘ My dear fellow ;’ ” persisted Fouché ; ‘ display a little more frankness. You are entrusted with a mission of some sort ; and thus much is certain, that by confiding its nature to me I may be useful to you ; for I can point out all the snares, political and social, that await you throughout Europe ; into some of which, without my assistance, you will inevitably fall.’ ”

“ I, however, persisted in my disclaimers, and sustained the pertinacious cross-questioning of the Minister without flinching ; until at length, piqued by my resistance, he gave me to understand that thenceforward I might look upon him as an enemy, since I had not seen fit to secure him as a friend. I affected not to

understand his meaning, and we parted thoroughly dissatisfied with each other.

“I cannot explain wherefore, but it is nevertheless certain, that our ambassador at Vienna would not credit my assertion when I informed him that I was a mere traveller; and that his reception of me was haughty and almost ungracious. It was in vain that I sought to impress him with a sense of my insignificance. I remarked that throughout the whole of our first interview, he scarcely removed his eyes from my passport, and particularly from the right-hand corner of the document; a curiosity by which I was considerably puzzled, as I had myself never detected any peculiarity in its appearance.

“Being anxious to examine it in my turn, I requested that he would restore it to me, which he immediately did; remarking as he passed it across the table:—

“‘Be careful not to lose it, as it liberates you entirely from my authority; I am simply required to aid and protect you in all emergencies, but you are perfectly independent of my jurisdiction. You alone, of all our countrymen in Austria, are empowered to set at naught even the order which I might find it expedient, in the interest of France, to issue for your departure from Vienna within four-and-twenty hours. You have undertaken a vast amount of responsibility, Monsieur; and you either have very powerful friends, or you are entrusted with secret functions of extraordinary importance.’

“These observations, as well as the tone in which they were uttered, were essentially disagreeable to me; denoting at once as they did an ill-breeding, and a sus-

picious jealousy which no really clever man in his position would have permitted himself to betray; they, however, enabled me to gauge the depth, or rather the narrowness, of his intellect at once; but as I was, even from his own showing, entirely independent both of his temper and his authority, I merely bowed in reply.

“‘Do you wish, Monsieur;’ he abruptly inquired; ‘to be presented to the Emperor?’

“‘Your Excellency could not do me a greater favor.’

“‘But is it necessary that I should personally present you at the palace?’

“‘It appears to me that any other means of access to His Majesty would not be consistent with my dignity as a Frenchman, and an *employé* of our Imperial master.’

“He again scrutinized me closely, but evidently had no faith in my sincerity; nevertheless, he could not, after the desire which I had expressed, do otherwise than promise that he would ascertain the day and hour when the Emperor would do me the honor to receive me; and I took my leave, highly amused at his mystification, and bequeathing to him sundry misgivings with regard to the nature of a mission which he would no doubt have been delighted to see me terminate at the bottom of the Danube.

“Meanwhile I was painfully anxious to succeed in my mysterious undertaking. It was easy enough to be discreet; but, under the circumstances, it was extremely difficult to act; and I was desirous not to lose time. Here I found myself on the very scene of my operations, but as yet I knew not where to apply the wedge which was to force an opening. Deliberating upon this dilemma, I walked on the morning succeeding my

interview with the irate ambassador, to the café Mitani in the Leopoldstadt, near the bridge leading to the Prater, where I seated myself in a remote corner, and ordered my breakfast.

“ While thus employed, I remarked at a table not far from my own an elderly man, plainly dressed, but who was waited upon by the attendants with an eagerness, a promptitude, and a respect, which they did not exhibit in the same degree towards any other customer ; while he received these marked attentions with the indifference of a person to whom they were habitual. When he rose to depart the waiters crowded round him ; one brought him his gloves, another his greatcoat, another his cane, and a fourth his hat ; a zeal which certainly was not to be explained by the very insignificant coin that he threw upon the table to reward their services.

“ All my nascent diplomacy was awakened within me. Who could this stranger be ? Who knew whether he might not be, in some way, serviceable to my undertaking ? As these thoughts succeeded each other in my brain, I turned towards one of the waiters, and inquired who the gentleman might be to whose comfort they all appeared so unusually devoted ?

“ ‘ Why, Monsieur ; ’ replied the man, shrugging his shoulders at the apparent absurdity of the question ; ‘ it is M. N——, of course.’

“ ‘ It would appear ; ’ I remarked, ‘ that to a Viennese the name must suffice, but it is not so in my case.’

“ The attendant looked at me in astonishment, as he said :—

“ ‘ Why, Monsieur, you must certainly have dropped

among us from the sky, or arrived from the world's end, for N—— is known by every child in Europe.'

“‘Yet I have just arrived from Paris, where I believe that it was never heard.’

“‘Well, then, Monsieur, M. N—— is the first valet-de-chambre of His Majesty the Emperor.’

“As I ascertained the identity of the personage, I could not repress a feeling of satisfaction; for could I only succeed in securing his confidence, there could be no doubt that he might be able to assist me most materially in the mysterious negotiation in which I was about to engage. I, however, asked no further questions, and left the café.

“On the following morning I again repaired thither at an earlier hour than I had hitherto done; and, having ordered my coffee, took possession of a seat opposite to that which I had occupied on the previous day. Scarcely had I established myself, and commenced reading a number of the *Journal de l'Empire*, the only French newspaper which was at that period allowed to circulate in Vienna, when the light was nearly shut out by a voluminous body which passed between me and the window. I looked up to ascertain the cause of this eclipse, and to my great satisfaction discovered that I had been thrown into the shade by M. N——.

“I could have embraced him, so delighted was I at his arrival; but I contented myself by bowing in the most courteous manner I could assume, as he removed his coat and hat, and prepared in his turn to make his morning meal.

“We soon entered into conversation, and as he immediately discovered that I was a foreigner, he soon

became at his ease, and inquired without ceremony the motive of my visit to the Austrian capital.

“‘Unfortunately;’ was my rejoinder; ‘my errand is by no means a pleasant one. Having been disappointed by my own sovereign, I have come here in the hope of inducing yours to examine into the merits of an important discovery that I have made.’

“‘Does it relate to any matter of finance?’ he asked.

“‘It does;’ I replied unhesitatingly; ‘and so intimately, that were it only subjected to a fair trial, it could not fail to replenish the treasury of any nation by which it might be adopted.’

“‘Since you assure me of this, and that you speak so confidently of its results;’ he said after a short silence; ‘I will undertake to obtain for you an audience of the Emperor. You can explain your business to His Majesty, and, should it meet his approval, all the rest will be easy.’

“I warmly expressed my thanks, nor did I fail to insinuate with all due caution to my new friend, that should I, through his good offices, be successful in my undertaking, I would find means to testify my gratitude without wounding his delicacy. He smiled his acknowledgments, and I left it entirely to his discretion to decide on the day and hour when I was to be honored by the audience I so ardently desired.

“As for speaking to His Majesty;’ he said; ‘there would be little difficulty in doing that, for no crowned head was ever more accessible; but it is by no means so easy to see him in private. I must watch for a good opportunity; and, until I have secured it, I advise you to spend all your afternoons with me. It is quite pos-

sible that, ere long, I shall have good tidings for you ; so keep up your spirits, for I feel sure that we shall carry our point.'

"Five days subsequently, my valuable acquaintance welcomed me with a beaming countenance.

"'Victory!' he shouted—'Victory! Your audience is arranged for this very midnight. I was early to-day busying myself about His Majesty when he was alone and in excellent humor, and I at once availed myself of so lucky a chance. When he heard your name and the rank which you hold at the court of Napoleon, and then learnt the nature of your errand, he began to laugh, and seemed to think that your financial scheme might be a good one; and in ten minutes he had consented to receive you, and instructed me how you were to be privately introduced into the palace. Sup with me, and we will set forth at the proper time.'

"The merriment with which the Emperor had greeted my name, and the announcement of my official position at the Tuileries, produced a very different effect upon me to that which it had awakened in the good valet-de-chambre; for I could not but suspect that His Majesty had at once arrived at the conclusion that, far from being a second John Law, I was, in point of fact, a secret emissary of Napoleon. This, however, was a secondary consideration. The audience was granted, and, such being the case, the letter marked No. 1 became useless, and I had only to deliver to the Austrian Emperor that which was marked No. 2; nevertheless, instead of destroying the former, I resolved to take it with me in the event of its proving serviceable.

"I then began to ask myself how I should proceed,

and the question was a serious one. Should I, so soon as the negociation was opened, acquaint myself with the contents of the third packet, and carefully read over the notes and documents relating to it? or should I, confining myself entirely to the verbal instructions I had received, delay doing so until the Emperor had consented to accord me a second interview? Ultimately, the blind obedience with which we were accustomed in France to execute all the commands of Napoleon, determined me to adopt the latter measure, and to wait, conformably to my instructions, until the Emperor Francis summoned me to another conference.

“Consequently, furnished with all the necessary credentials to attest my ambassadorial quality, I awaited with impatience and anxiety the important moment in which I should be called upon to act in the name, and on the behalf, of my Imperial master.

“I ate but a meagre supper, to the great dissatisfaction of my hospitable entertainer; and, at its close, I hastened to make the prescribed preparations. Attired in the Imperial livery of Austria, and carrying an enormous bundle of linen, so arranged that it concealed my face in the event of encountering any one whose curiosity might have endangered the success of our adventure, I followed the valet-de-chambre, who bore a candlestick with two branches, (the characteristic symbol of his office,) and in due time we arrived, by a labyrinth of private passages, in the outer cabinet of His Majesty. There I was left under the safeguard of my lucky star, while my conductor passed into an inner chamber; and there I remained for ten or twelve minutes, which appeared to me interminable, trembling at the risk of

being discovered, recognised, and thus compromising the secret of my Sovereign, as well as of becoming the laughing-stock of all the diplomatists of Europe; or, worse still, of exciting the enmity of his ministers, the ridicule of all the French royalists, and of figuring in an English caricature.

“None of the evils that I apprehended occurred, however, as, finally, the valet-de-chambre reappeared and bade me follow him, which I did with a strong feeling of annoyance and mortification, as I reflected upon the costume in which I was for the first time to approach the German Emperor. Fortunately, in diplomacy as in love, nothing is considered either dishonorable or ridiculous, and with this axiom I endeavored to console myself.

“I immediately recognised Francis II. by his tall, slight, and upright figure. He was standing, as was the traditional custom of his family on such occasions, leaning upon a table, on which were burning two candles of yellow wax. Why this particular and unpleasant color should have been adopted and required by Austrian etiquette, I know not; but it is certain that all persons who have been received at night by a German Emperor, have remarked this singular detail of court ceremony.

“My zealous friend N—— would fain have assisted at the audience; but, as he had no pretext for remaining in the apartment, he was compelled to retire before I had completed the three profound inclinations exacted by custom.

“‘Monsieur le Comte;’ commenced the Emperor, as I for the third time recovered the perpendicular; ‘what

is this that N—— tells me? Have you, in fact, any financial scheme to propose, or do you not rather come as the confidential envoy of your sovereign?

“‘Sire,’ I replied; ‘the Emperor, my master, has honored me as Your Majesty suspects; but he desires that the negotiation with which I am entrusted should be carried on exclusively between Your August Majesty and himself, whose humble representative I am; and that above all, neither the ministers of Your Imperial Majesty, nor his own resident ambassador, should be made cognisant of its existence. Here is my letter of credence; and when you have condescended to read it, I shall be at Your Majesty’s orders.’”

“The Emperor smiled graciously as he extended his hand, and evidently read the document with great attention; after which he glanced towards me, appeared lost in thought, and again read it from end to end; nor did my suspense terminate there; for, to my extreme astonishment, he recommenced its perusal a third time, which was no sooner concluded than he said suddenly:—

“‘Monsieur, the Emperor, your master, begs me to defer the close of this negotiation until I have granted you a second audience. I do not know that I can, upon this point, accede to his desire. The forms of the Austrian monarchy involve certain rules from which I will not deviate; it is well to uphold them, for they are decidedly conservative in their principle. We absolute sovereigns;’ he pursued with a smile; ‘are strange despots; our tyranny, as it is denominated in England, in France, and in Italy, is wonderfully temperate. We never decide any question without the concurrence of our

ministers and the counsellors we have ourselves selected. Consequently, I regret that I cannot promise you a second audience; nor, even if I were disposed to accord it to you, could I discuss the subject of your mission without the co-operation of my council. In any case, assure His Majesty the Emperor of the French that the greatest and the most profound secrecy shall be observed with regard to this important negotiation. It is, moreover, expedient that the valet-de-chambre by whom you have been introduced, should still believe in the reality of your financial project; tell him that you have subjected your scheme to me, and that I have been impressed by it, but that I require time for reflection before I return a positive answer to your proposition.'

"As he ceased speaking the Emperor rang a silver bell that was placed near him, upon which I bowed profoundly, and withdrew.

"'Well!' exclaimed N—— anxiously, as he saw me approach; 'have you been successful?'

"'Yes and no,' I answered, with as much composure as I could command; 'the Emperor approves my plan, but he cannot at present give his attention to it; nor can I venture to hope that he will do so for some time to come. Nevertheless, I believe that all will end favorably, and I need not say that I shall only be too happy to prove to you that I am not ungrateful. Meanwhile, do me the favor to accept this earnest of my good will.'

"As I spoke I placed in his hand a purse containing a hundred Napoleons, which he accepted with evident satisfaction; and when I had laid aside the livery,

which appeared to burn into my flesh like the fabled garment of Nessus, he accompanied me to the outer gate of the Imperial palace, where we parted for the night.

“I waited several days, during which I heard nothing from N——, upon whose not entirely disinterested zeal I felt convinced that I could thoroughly rely; still trusting to obtain a second audience of the Emperor, and resolved, in my uncertainty, not to break the seal of the Imperial instructions, lest I should appear to have been eager to possess myself of the secrets of my Sovereign.

“A week went by.

“On the morning of the eighth day an officer of the Hungarian guard, in his magnificent and gem-embroidered uniform, entered my apartment; and after having satisfied himself of my identity, said courteously:—

“‘Monsieur, the person from whom you are awaiting an answer has instructed me to inform you that his position will not permit him to receive you as you desire. If *the merchant* of whom you are the agent should consent that his proposition shall be submitted to the discussion of the lawyers employed by the other party, the business may be pursued; but otherwise it is impossible.’

“I bowed in silence. The rupture was complete; and most sincerely did I congratulate myself that I had not yielded to the temptation which had so frequently impelled me to ascertain the nature of the instructions by which I was to have been guided in the event of success. That I had most signally failed in my mission

I was painfully aware; and yet I could not blame myself. I had been driven blindfold and handbound into a difficult position, where the eyes of Argus and the heads of Briareus would scarcely have sufficed me; but I had resided at court long enough to know that with princes, success is only a duty fulfilled, while failure is a crime to be expiated and atoned; and I consequently felt that all the bright visions in which I had indulged on my departure from France had crumbled into nothingness.

“ Having nothing more to do in Vienna, I resolved to return without further delay to Paris, to report the unfavorable issue of my mission; and, even amid my annoyance, I could not repress a smile as I remarked the astonishment of my friend the ambassador when I waited on him to announce my departure, and that he was compelled to credit the fact that I had not visited Vienna for the purpose of superseding him in his office, but simply to sojourn in the German capital a sufficient time to enable me to inspect its public monuments, and to afford myself an opportunity of comparing its society with that of our own beautiful Paris.

“ On reaching home, which I did by the most direct route that I could follow, in order to render up an account of my mission with as little delay as possible, I ascertained that Napoleon was driving in the Bois de Boulogne; and I was already preparing to follow him, when, on glancing from my window, I saw the tri-colored flag flying from the dome of the Tuileries, a sure sign that he had returned to the palace. I felt fevered and travelworn, and it was with considerable

trepidation that I descended the stairs of my hotel, and prepared for the forthcoming interview. As I reached the court of the palace, Napoleon was alighting from his carriage, and motioned me to follow him.

“‘You have failed in your embassy, Monsieur;’ he said abruptly, as soon as we were alone.

“‘I have, Sire; and I accordingly return your notes intact;’ I replied, as I handed to him with a profound obeisance the unsealed packet which had been committed to my discretion.

“He took it hastily, and examined it so closely that I felt the hot blood rush to my forehead; but I remained motionless, and did not utter a syllable. Nor was I singular in my emotion at that moment, for the Emperor had no sooner satisfied himself that I had not deceived him, than his brow became dark, his lips quivered, and, by a convulsive movement, he crushed the papers in his hand, muttering to himself: ‘Ah! they want war, do they? They shall have it—but they will repent. I offered them—’

“Then suddenly recollecting my presence, he became preternaturally calm as if by enchantment; and turning towards me, said in his habitually steady voice:—

“‘Monsieur, I am satisfied with your zeal, but you are not fortunate. Retain the sum which I placed in your hands, as some small return for the fatigue and anxiety that you have undergone. *I will take care of you.*’

“These last words were those commonly used by Napoleon towards such persons as he designed to honor with his protection; and he never forfeited his pledge. I was consequently not surprised when, some time sub-

sequently, in addition to the magnificent present which I had already received, the Grand-Marshal of the palace remitted to me, in the name of his Imperial master, a gold box enriched with diamonds, valued at thirty-six thousand livres; nor even when a few months later he bestowed upon me a *majorat* of fifteen thousand annual francs.

“Magnificent in all his ideas, Napoleon never suffered the slightest service to remain unrewarded. He left it to less powerful and less high-minded sovereigns to accept any evidence of good-will or respect without acknowledgment; and thus, if he were served with zeal and devotion—and assuredly no monarch in Europe ever experienced more—although he occasionally met with ingratitude, and even treachery, the blame of such defection rested upon those by whom he was thus betrayed, and could never be traced to any deficiency of high and generous feeling on his own part.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DRAMA OF WAR.

THE frightful battle of Essling, after having lasted for thirty consecutive hours, was drawing to a close. The havoc had been immense in the French army; generals, officers of inferior rank, and an almost countless number of troops lay dead upon the field. The artillery and infantry had almost exhausted their ammunition; the

cannon were dismounted; and the horses killed. For some time the firing had become gradually fainter, and during the evening the opposing armies were evidently pursuing their work of slaughter rather from a feeling of reluctance on either side to be the first to suspend hostilities, than from any hope of a decisive termination of the battle.

Napoleon had become convinced of the impossibility of carrying out, under such circumstances, the execution of his great project; and consequently resolved to defer it until he had strengthened the bridges, and collected his troops in the Island of Lobau as in a vast entrenched camp. He had already determined on this modification of his original design; but before issuing his orders for the retrograde movement, he rode rapidly along the right bank of the island to ascertain to what advantage he could turn the position, as well as what it was probable that the enemy might attempt in order to dislodge him; and then, satisfied that he should be enabled to effect his object, he returned to the small bridge to overlook the necessary preparations for the retreat. He several times sent for Masséna; but the fate of Aspern appearing to depend on the presence of the Marshal, he could not quit that important post till near seven o'clock, when the Emperor at length assembled all his principal officers, and desired that each would frankly state his opinion of the situation of the army. They would but admit that it was critical in the extreme; and they were unanimous in their advice that such of the troops as had been already engaged should be placed in safety on the right bank. "And;" added Masséna; "I will undertake to cut my way, should it

be necessary, through the enemy's army, or to hold my ground, if I am required to take my station on the shores of the Lobau."

"While I;" exclaimed Davoust; "if I am entrusted with the command of the 3rd corps, will keep the Archduke Charles in check, should he make his appearance on the right bank, and thus secure time to reconstruct the bridges."

Napoleon, delighted at the ardor of his marshals, smiled calmly as he replied: "You wish to repass the Danube—but how is it to be done? Are not all the small bridges destroyed? Had not such been the case should we not ere now have been victorious, and already far from this? We could, it is true, embark both men and horses on board the boats; but what would become of the artillery? Can we abandon our wounded? Shall we add to the losses of the last two days that of so many brave men who have fought and bled in the same cause, and those who are still wandering in the woods, unable to rejoin us? Shall we thus admit alike to the enemy and to all Europe that the conquerors are conquered in their turn? And if the Archduke, more vain of our retreat than of his assumed success, crosses the Danube behind us at Tulln, at Krems, and at Lintz—if he consolidates his several corps, where shall we be able to retire? Must it be in the positions which I have entrenched on the Trann, the Inn, and the Lech? No—we must advance to the Rhine—for those allies for whom we are indebted to victory and success, an apparent defeat would render lukewarm, or even hostile. We must remain where we are; we must menace an enemy accustomed to fear us, and keep him in our

front. Before he has determined on his plan of operations, or has had time to test its efficacy, the bridges must be repaired in a sufficiently solid manner to secure us against all accidents. The different corps of the army may consolidate themselves, and protect both shores; and, moreover, the army of Italy, which will be shortly followed by Lefèvre, will strengthen us by its numerical force, and by the *prestige* of its victories; while it will, in a few days, open for us through Styria a line of communication which is still closed, and which will even replace that of Bavaria; and then indeed we shall be entire masters of all future operations."

A murmur of assent and admiration welcomed his words.

"Masséna;" pursued Napoleon, after the pause of a moment, and with the smile which exercised so extraordinary a fascination over all whom he sought to conciliate; "you will complete what you have so gloriously begun; you alone possess the power to keep the Archduke inactive before us. I have thoroughly examined the island of Lobau, and the ground is favorable for you."

As the Emperor ceased speaking, the council broke up, and the several members of the military court moved away, until Napoleon remained alone with Masséna, when they slowly proceeded to the small bridge, making such arrangements as the difficulties of their position exacted. It was decided that on the following morning, as early as two o'clock, the troops should defile, that the pontoon bridge should be preserved, and that the entrenchments at its entrance should be efficiently reinforced; the command of all the troops

on the left bank, as well as those then occupying the Danubian islands, being confided to Masséna.

Scarcely had this important point been determined when a mournful procession was seen advancing; and Marshal Lannes, mortally wounded, was borne towards the Emperor. He was carried on a litter borne by a party of grenadiers, down whose rugged cheeks tears were coursing each other like rain, and surrounded by his officers;—or rather, such as still survived—all of whom were more or less wounded. The dying warrior had had both his knees broken by a cannon ball. The army was about to lose one of its most gallant leaders, France one of her proudest illustrations, and Napoleon a friend full of zeal and devotion, by whom he had never been betrayed.

As nothing can be uninteresting or unimportant which relates to the last moments of a man whose name has become historical, but whose memory has been wronged by several authors, some of whom wrote in ignorance of the truth, and some with the ungenerous bitterness of prejudice, it is a pleasant task to be enabled to confute both the one and the other by a plain and simple statement of facts.

Between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, Lannes was proceeding on foot in the rear of the riflemen stationed between Essling and Aspern, encouraging them by his presence, and accompanied by General Pouzet under whom he had studied the art of war, and who had returned with him from Spain, when a spent ball struck the general on the forehead, and he fell dead at the feet of his friend. Lannes, totally overcome by the catastrophe, after a last look at the brave man so

suddenly cut off, moved away slowly towards Essling; and having no other duty to perform save that of preserving his force against the feeble attacks of the Archduke, he seated himself in the valley which extends between the two villages, and gave a free course to his grief. Shortly afterwards some soldiers bearing the body of Pouzet approached him, upon which he rose and walked on, exclaiming: "This fearful sight will haunt me everywhere!" But ere long, crushed and exhausted by the intensity of his sorrow, he again seated himself upon the ground, where he still remained surrounded by those of his officers who had escaped with life, when a three-pounder, which had been fired from Enzersdorf, struck the ground, and after two or three bounds, fell heavily upon his knees, as he sat with his legs crossed over each other.

The Emperor no sooner saw the litter approach, and ascertained the identity of its occupant, than he rushed forward, threw himself upon the neck of his dying friend, and embraced him fervently.

"Lannes—my dear Lannes;" he sobbed out, scarcely able to articulate from the violence of his emotion; "do you recognise me? It is the Emperor—it is Bonaparte.—My friend—Lannes—look up—we will save you yet."

The wounded man by a painful effort opened his eyes, looked for an instant earnestly in the face of his sovereign, and gasped out:—

"Sire, I should wish to live if I could still serve you—and France—but I believe—I think—that in an hour hence—you will have lost one who loved you well."

Napoleon, on his knees beside the expiring hero,

wept bitterly. Great as had been his losses in those two eventful days, he had experienced none which had so powerfully affected him as the mortal hurt of the brave and gallant Lannes; and as the latter was once more carefully lifted from the ground by his bearers, and slowly conveyed to Enzersdorf, where he was to undergo the amputation of both his legs, Napoleon, turning towards Masséna, said mournfully: "I must have been heart-struck indeed to-day to have been able to think for an instant of anything save the precarious position of my army."

The wounded marshal was not able to support the fatigue of crossing the Danube until the morning of the 23rd; but his great anxiety to ascertain where a certain Count Palfi, who had, like himself, undergone amputation, had procured mechanical legs with which he was enabled to keep his seat on horseback, and to resume his command, induced him on the evening of the 22d to order his equipages to be halted on the frontier, in the vain hope that he should be sufficiently recovered to rejoin the corps d'armée which he had so recently led, before the close of the Austrian campaign, which was speedily anticipated.

During the afternoon of the 24th he became delirious, and continued so until the 30th, on which day he was released from his sufferings. Throughout the whole of his hallucinations he imagined himself to be leading his men to battle, issued orders to his officers, and entreated the Emperor to send him reinforcements, utterly unconscious that the individual whom he invoked was standing beside him. Night and morning during those seven frightful days Napoleon regularly visited him;

but he was never left alone with him for an instant ; and it is a fact, authenticated by those who were constantly with him to the last, that the words attributed to the Marshal were never uttered, but that he died in all honor and loyalty to the Emperor, and to France.

Here is an anecdote, also connected with the battle of Essling, which has appeared to us worthy of preservation.

At the commencement of the year 1813, after the defeat at Moscow, Napoleon, being anxious to judge for himself of the popular feeling towards him, resolved to traverse all the faubourgs of Paris, and to commence with that of Saint-Antoine. Accordingly, on a day when the Grand-Marshal of the palace being indisposed he was attended only by an aide-de-camp, he got into a hackney-coach, and desired the driver to take him to the Place de la Bastille, where he alighted, and then proceeded on foot to the rue de Charonne. On reaching the end of the street, he stopped to watch some masons who were at work on a large building in process of erection ; and a minute or two afterwards he remarked that one among them suddenly ceased his labor, and stood motionless before him.

“Do you recognise me ?” he asked promptly, moving a pace or two nearer to the man.

“Do I recognise my Emperor !” was the rejoinder, as the mason raised the back of his right hand to his forehead, and suffered the tool which he held to fall to the ground ; “Oh, I shall do so to my dying day.”

“And I, too, know you,” replied Napoleon, his wonderful memory never being at fault for an instant ; “your name is Gregoire Boivin, and you were a corpo-

ral in the second regiment of my foot-guards. You received two wounds at the battle of Essling; and at the request of your colonel I gave you a decoration. Some time subsequently I sanctioned your admission into the *hôtel des Invalides*; how comes it then that I see you here to-day?"

Gregoire remained as immovable as a statue, and did not utter a word.

"I am to understand that you were expelled, am I not?" pursued the Emperor; "what fault had you committed?"

Still there was no reply.

"You do not remember, perhaps," said Napoleon; "well then, I will tell you; and you know that I seldom forget anything. One morning, after having acted like a fool, you talked like a lunatic."

"Oh, *mon Empereur!*" exclaimed the ex-guardsmen, raising his head proudly; "You cannot call them the words of a madman."

"I do so most assuredly;" persisted Napoleon; "did you not shout like a maniac, Long live the Republic?"

"So I did, *mon Empereur*, for I remembered that I had been one of the volunteers of '93; and as I had been a little tipsy overnight, and was still flurried in my head in the morning, I could not help shouting."

"Yes; long live the Republic! And pray what was your Republic? What was it like? You were expelled, and you richly merited your fate."

"I do not deny it, *mon Empereur*;" replied Gregoire sheepishly; "but you must own that when a man loves you as I do, when he has fought for France and his

Emperor as I have done, when he has a wife and children as in my case, it is very hard to find himself without bread or board only because he drank a glass or two of wine too much."

As he uttered these words, the mason could not restrain two large tears, which rolled down his sunburnt and furrowed cheeks, and which were not without their effect upon Napoleon.

"Ah!" he exclaimed; "you are the father of a family. That alters the case. Why did you not say so at once? What age is your eldest?"

"I have two eldest;" replied Gregoire; "that is to say, they are twins, and will both join the army next year."

"Good;" said the Emperor; "and next, what have you done with your cross?"

"My cross;" repeated the ex-guardsman, opening his vest, and displaying a bit of dirty and almost colorless ribbon; "my cross! Absent by reason of lyings-in and other urgent domestic necessities; but as regards the ribbon—Present. The very identical one that my colonel gave me on parade; only it has served its time, and is invalided like its owner."

After looking steadily at his old follower for an instant, the Emperor took fifteen Napoleons from the purse of his aide-de-camp, and placed them in the hand of the mason.

"Here," he said, "are the means of renewing the ribbon, and of drinking my health with your comrades; but in moderation, you understand; and if, under the influence of wine, you should again feel inclined to be noisy, let your cry be, 'Long live France!' *That* is a shout that will find many echoes, and which no one

will object to. Come to me to-morrow at the Tuileries ; ask to speak to the aide-de-camp on duty, and tell the porter that you are there by my orders : he will let you pass. There, remain where you are, and be silent, as I do not wish your fellow-workmen to know that I am here."

On the following day, Gregoire Boivin again received an authorisation of admission to the hôtel des Invalides ; for as he had no pension, the Emperor would not allow one of his old soldiers to suffer want because, as he expressed it, he had, while intoxicated, uttered shouts which *had not common sense*.

While Bonaparte was General-in-Chief of the army of Italy, he attached himself particularly to a few brave old soldiers, whom he was always pleased to meet in his ranks after he became their Emperor. Among these was a certain veteran named Lambert, who had grown grey beneath the shadow of the national standards, and who had been engaged in every campaign of the revolution.

A few days before the battle of Lodi, as Bonaparte was visiting his advanced posts, he expressed his annoyance on hearing several shots fired, and exclaimed angrily :—

"I will not have the powder wasted in firing at the bushes."

These words had scarcely escaped his lips, when the discharge of a score of carbines whistled in his ears ; and a few seconds afterwards, when he had recovered from his surprise, he saw that the veteran Lambert, during the firing, had made a rampart for him with his own body.

“What are you doing here?” asked the General.

“I am waiting until you give me leave to knock one of those ravens off his perch.”

“Do you suppose that they are there waiting for you? Return to your rank.”

“General, they are in the ravine, as they were yesterday.”

“The greater the reason that you should not remain here. They may hit you.”

“No fear of that. Had they known how to take aim, they would already have killed us both; first me, and then you.”

“Could you pick off their leader?”

“Only let me try, and I will promise to provide for him.”

“Well; as you are so anxious to prove your skill, make the attempt.”

The soldier saluted, and set off on his self-appointed task.

At the end of an hour and a half—during the latter part of which time, from the perpetual firing that had been heard, Bonaparte began to apprehend that Lambert had fallen a sacrifice to his own rashness, and to regret that he had exposed a brave man to almost certain death—he suddenly reappeared.

“That is over, General;” he said, with a low chuckle; “I told you that the awkward brutes did not know how to handle their carbines; and now they have nothing more to do but to bury their captain.”

“What is your name?” asked Bonaparte.

“Ambroise Lambert, of Pontoise, department of the Seine and Ouse, General.”

“I am very glad,” said the young commander; “that you did not meet with the same fate as their officer. I will not forget you.”

“Thank you, General; I am very glad to hear you say so,” was the unsophisticated reply.

Lambert accompanied Bonaparte to Egypt, but he was not again in his presence until after the siege of Saint-Jean-d’Acre; when, although he had received a severe wound on the head, he persisted in retaining his place in the ranks while Bonaparte passed his brigade in review.

“Well, Lambert;” he said, as he stopped before him; “these fellows seem to have been better marksmen than those at Lodi. They have played you rather a sorry jest this time.”

“Yes, I have been hot enough in all ways in this cursed country, General;” was the rejoinder; “luckily I have suffered for you, so I have nothing to regret.”

“How do you expect me to repay you for all your sufferings?”

“By thanking me, as I thanked you that other time—you remember?”

“Yes, I remember the circumstance perfectly; but to-day I shall offer my thanks in the shape of a sword of honor.”

“It will be accepted, General. That will be the very thing I should like best.”

Throughout all the succeeding years, Napoleon never lost sight of Lambert, who was one of his especial favorites; but the last time they ever met was on a fatal day for France—it was on the passage of the Beresina.

“So you are turned ferryman on this occasion?” he

said kindly ; “ when there is duty to be done you are always at your post.”

“ To be sure, *mon Empereur* ; where should I be except where you want me ? But this is not fair fighting, and this time I have lost my nose.”

“ We have not met for a long time ;” observed Napoleon.

“ No, *Majesté*, the last time was on the hot day when we accomplished a forced march ; but the temperature has changed furiously since then.”

“ What ! Do you mean to tell me that you are cold ?” exclaimed the Emperor abruptly, anxious to prevent him from expressing his full meaning.

“ I, *mon Empereur* ! Not a bit. I don’t feel it, and as long as you don’t complain, I am comfortable enough. Besides, whenever I catch a sight of you it warms me.”

Three days afterwards Napoleon learnt that Lambert had been frozen to death.

“ I shall find it difficult to replace him ;” he said, as he dashed a tear from his cheek that was already half congealed into an icicle.

Whenever Napoleon distributed titles or decorations among his officers, it was always understood that they were the prelude to some important undertaking ; and they were universally succeeded by a review of the newly-arrived regiments, and by a harangue to the troops, when his words never failed to produce a magical effect upon the soldiers ; but of all the exciting and dramatic scenes which were constantly witnessed during each campaign, that of bestowing the eagles on a new regiment was the most impressive.

On the day appointed for this ceremony, at which Napoleon always attended in person, accompanied by his own staff, the regiment mustered at an early hour upon the selected spot in triple ranks, forming three sides of a hollow square, the fourth being left open for the passage of the Emperor and his suite. On his entrance into the open space, his marshals, generals, and other attendants stationed themselves in single file on the reserved side of the square while he advanced alone, mounted on one of his favorite chestnut-colored chargers; and rendered still more conspicuous to the troops by the simplicity of his dress, which formed a striking contrast with the brilliantly-embroidered uniforms and jewelled decorations of the superior officers.

Having received the orders of the Emperor, the Prince of Wagram (in his quality of Lieutenant-General) alighted, and unfurled the colors which were then withdrawn from their leather case; the colonel of the regiment standing on his right hand, with his officers beside him arranged in file according to their respective rank. As he waved the standards to and fro the drums beat the appel, until Marshal Berthier received the eagle from the officer to whose charge it had been confided, and advanced a few paces towards the Emperor; when Napoleon, withdrawing his hat, saluted the colors, and taking off his glove, raised his right hand to the eagle, and in a solemn and emphatic voice exclaimed:—

“Soldiers! To you I entrust the French eagle. I confide it to your valor and patriotism. It will be at once your guide, and your rallying point. You swear never to abandon it! You swear alike to live and to

die for it! You swear to prefer death to the dishonor of seeing it torn from your hands! You all swear this?" and Napoleon uttered the last interrogatory, "You all swear this?" in so marked and energetic a manner that it became a species of signal at which the officers waved their swords in the air, while the men shouted in unison: "Yes, yes; we swear it!" The eagle was then delivered to the standard-bearer of the regiment by Berthier; the troops formed into column, closed their ranks, and defiled before Napoleon, the bands playing, and the air rent with cries of "Long live the Emperor!"

The review was succeeded by a banquet, given by the colonel to the whole of his officers, while double rations both of food and brandy were distributed to the soldiers of the regiment; and it is almost unnecessary to add that towards evening three-fourths of the men were overcome by enthusiasm and eau-de-vie, so vigorously had they shouted and drunk to the health of the Emperor.

There was a singular consistency in the character of Napoleon. In almost every incident of his life, it will be remarked by those by whom it has been closely studied, that he invariably appeared to have acted upon the impulse of the moment; when, in point of fact, he had compelled himself to total inaction until his intention was fully matured, and the strength of his will was pre-eminent over all other considerations. In his marriage with Josephine this peculiarity was strongly exhibited; when the subject was first mooted to him by Barras he did not seek to conceal his repugnance to the match, but when he had once consented to make her his wife, nothing could exceed his anxiety

to see it terminated ; and thus it was with every other important, as well as with every other minor, detail of his extraordinary career. He had patience to consider and to combine ; but having once arrived at a decision, he was nervously eager to work out his purpose.

In nothing was this peculiarity more apparent than in his military movements ; no one could ever guess beforehand in the Imperial palace the day, or even the week, when he designed to abandon the repose of his home-sojourn for a foreign campaign. He confided to none the designs that he had formed, or the movements that he contemplated ; and thus it was essential that both the civil and military officers of his household should be ready at a moment's notice to obey his orders, be they what they might ; while as they were always ignorant by whom it was his intention to be accompanied, as well as their final destination, all were alike compelled patiently to await the transmission of his pleasure through the Grand-Marshal.

Like the late Duke of York, Napoleon was peculiarly partial to night-travelling ; and when it did not militate against his contemplated operations, he generally started from St. Cloud at one or two o'clock in the morning, when he got into his carriage, accompanied only by the Grand-Marshal or the Grand-Equerry, and frequently accomplished nearly a hundred and fifty leagues in less than six-and-thirty hours. Consequently, some of those by whom he was to have been joined on the way, were sure to remain in the rear, and occasionally did not reach head-quarters until the day after a battle had been fought, and sometimes not even till the close of the campaign.

“It was time you made your appearance, monsieur;” he would exclaim on such occasions to the laggard: “but fortunately we have been able to dispense with your presence.”

Everything at head-quarters was done in equal haste, but still all those who composed its staff were expected to be ready on the instant, to fulfil to the letter the duties of their several ranks; as halts, forced marches, changes of the hours previously fixed upon for certain operations, as well as in those of routes and temporary quarters, were continually occurring.

On the other hand the march of the troops was often retarded for several hours, and sometimes even for nearly a day, while the General-in-chief was writing in his cabinet with the Duke de Bassano, or dictating to his secretaries; but at the words: “Now then, the carriage! To your saddles, Messieurs!” pronounced in a dry and abrupt accent, every one was instantly in motion; and then only did the marshals and generals ascertain where they were to make their next halt.

The grand-marshal, and in the event of his absence, the grand-equerry, or the lieutenant-general, shared the carriage of the Emperor; and sometimes all three at the same time. One of the mounted aides-de-camp on duty rode on the left side of the vehicle, the equerry on duty on the right; while the other aides-de-camp, equeries, orderly-officers, pages, and prickers with led horses, the Mameluke Rustan, and the Imperial servants accompanied the carriage; and were followed by an escort of twenty-four chasseurs of the guard (*guides*) under the command of an officer; and all this crowd of horsemen rushed on like a tempest, travelling at a

rapid trot day and night, and accomplishing as much as eight, ten, and even twelve leagues, without once drawing bridle.

Those who were compelled to follow this first division had by no means a sinecure, particularly during the darkness ; and where the road chanced to be narrow they almost rode over each other in their anxiety to keep up with the Imperial train. Wo be to him who was a bad rider, or who was ill-mounted, as in the event of a fall, the least evil which he had to anticipate was to be trampled upon by those behind him, who never slackened their pace for such trifles. It was like a race for life or death, under the hot sun, in the pouring rain, over the frosty ground, in the snow-storms, or amid clouds of dust, or banks of fog ; and this only to be within call of the Emperor should he require their services. Those who were the least inconvenienced on these journeys were the orderly officer, the page, the pricker, and the two chasseurs who preceded the carriage by about fifty or sixty paces ; for they had no reason to fear anything save a reprimand from Napoleon, as the postilions regulated their pace according to that of these officials, and he never appeared to think that he could travel fast enough.

“ They ride like wet hens ! ” he constantly exclaimed, striking the side of the vehicle with his clenched hands ; “ we shall never get to our journey’s end ! ” and finally he would let down the glass, and himself cry impatiently to the postilions : “ Quicker, quicker ! you fellows. Are you asleep ? You make no way : put your horses to their speed.”

Whenever Napoleon alighted from his carriage all

his suite immediately sprang from their saddles, except the chasseurs of the guard, who remained motionless until the Emperor permitted them also to leave their horses, which he intimated by saying abruptly : "Dismount, Messieurs."

These delays were occasioned by his wish to breathe for a few instants a less close atmosphere than that of the calèche in which he travelled, or to ascend a steep hill on foot. When he desired to reconnoitre the enemy by the aid of his glass, he invariably steadied it on the shoulder of the page on duty ; and as this new species of stand did not always maintain its immobility, the Emperor was accustomed to say good-humoredly, but still not without a little impatience :

"Be still, Monsieur, don't stir—do you hear what I say to you? Will you do me the favor to be quiet for a few instants, if indeed such a thing be possible."

Then, when he was weary of his survey, as on many occasions there was literally nothing to see, he would return the telescope to the page, giving him a tap with the back of his hand on the cheek, as if tacitly to reward him for his obedience, and perhaps a little for the patience which he had exhibited.

An evening or two before the battle of Lutzen, the Emperor, being on one of these reconnoitring expeditions, thought that he perceived in the distance some extraordinary object ; and turning to the page who stood nearest to him, he said imperatively :—

"Gallop off as hard as you can, Monsieur ; and ascertain what it is that I see yonder. Be back immediately, as I shall wait for you here."

The page vaulted on his horse in an instant, drove

the spurs into its flanks, and away he flew like the wind.

“The boy rides like a centaur!” exclaimed Napoleon to Caulaincourt, who was standing beside him; but the words had scarcely passed his lips, when down went horse and horseman, rolling one over the other. The Emperor uttered an emphatic *Ah!* forced from him by the apprehension that the poor page was killed; when to his astonishment he saw him scramble up, draw the animal towards him by the bridle, which he had not relinquished in his fall, mount again, and resume his wild speed.

“Why, the lad is a devil!” cried the Emperor admiringly; “any one else would have broken both arms and legs: but as for him, he must be an elastic ball.”

Not a quarter of an hour elapsed before the persevering messenger returned, smothered in mud—for it was in the beginning of April; it had rained heavily, and the ground was as slippery as glass—his face, his chest, and his whole uniform were one mass of dirt, and it would have been impossible to recognise him. Without, however, alluding to his accident, he proceeded to inform his Imperial master of the result of his mission, which was that the dark group discovered by Napoleon, and which he had believed to be a party of Cossacks bivouacked, was simply a clump of brushwood stirred by the wind. Mortified by his mistake, the Emperor immediately changed the subject.

“And pray, Monsieur;” he asked in affected displeasure; “what do you mean by presenting yourself before me in such a condition?”

“Sire;” replied the boy, who was evidently much shaken by his fall; “in order to execute the commands of Your Majesty to the best of my ability, I over-urged my horse: his forelegs gave way; and—”

“Precisely;” said Napoleon, biting his lips to suppress a smile, for as the mud dried upon the unfortunate page, his appearance became every moment more ludicrous; “and so because your horse happened to slip, you thought proper to lose your seat. I suppose that was also his fault?”

“Sire;” stammered the youth; “I can really assure Your Majesty that it was not mine.”

“I was sure that such would be your answer;” laughed the Emperor, for he could restrain his mirth no longer; “but I beg to tell you, Monsieur, that it *was* your fault; as, although I directed you to gallop, I never ordered you to go *ventre à terre*.” And pleased with his own pun, he added kindly: “Never mind; it will be nothing at all; go, and get some rest, and by to-morrow we shall both have forgotten the whole affair.”

By the advice of a surgeon, the page was forthwith bled, but he could not leave his bed for several days, he was so severely bruised; and as he saw him limp away, Napoleon shook his head, and observed regretfully to the Prince of Neufchâtel:—

“Only see, Berthier, how the poor boy suffers, from having risked his life to obey my orders. They are all alike! However, I did right not to appear to pity him, for it will not do to spoil the young rascals.”

And as he turned away, the Marshal heard him murmur beneath his breath: “Poor boy! Poor boy!”

Before any serious engagement, or whenever circumstances compelled the Emperor to remain for any length of time in the open air, either at dawn or in the evening, the piquers and servants made a large fire, which they perpetually fed with an enormous quantity of wood; thick branches of trees, ponderous logs, and even piles of faggots were consumed; and this fire served as a signal to indicate to those who formed the staff at head-quarters the precise spot where Napoleon had taken up his station. During this time, Berthier, Duroc, or Caulaincourt remained constantly near him, but it was seldom that any other individual, whatever might be his rank, was permitted to share his watch; though occasionally he sent for an officer from whom he required information, or in order to give a verbal order, or to dispatch a messenger to one of his marshals. Every one remained fifty or sixty paces from the fire, around which they formed a circle, while Napoleon walked to and fro in the open space, either whistling or conversing until a gun was fired, or some other concerted signal given by the commanders of the different corps. When he became wearied by delay he took snuff, tossed about the loose pebbles with his feet, and generally urged the flames into greater violence with his boots, by which process, as a natural consequence, he always burnt them all at the extremities.

We do not think that we can more appositely conclude this chapter than by committing to our pages a very striking dialogue upon the Art of War, which took place between General Bonaparte, after his first campaign in Italy, which was terminated by the treaty of Campo-Formio, and Moreau, whose masterly retreat

had excited the admiration of the whole army. Even while expressing his gratification at the compliments of his Corsican colleague, Moreau in some sort endeavored to excuse himself for having been compelled to fall back before an enemy greatly superior in numbers to his own troops.

“What could you do?” said Bonaparte; “our forces were too much separated; and victory must always finally remain with the stronger party.”

“The principle is materially correct;” conceded his companion; “but you have, nevertheless, yourself proved to us in your late Italian campaign that it is not infallible. Has it not often been apparent that inferiority of numbers may be amply balanced by courage, experience, discipline, and above all by the talents of a leader?”

“In a battle I admit that it may be so, but rarely in a campaign;” said Bonaparte.

“In that case you reduce the Art of War to a merely individual and simple idea;” expostulated Moreau; “and you have nothing to do but to levy more troops than your enemy. Of what utility, under such a conviction, are tactics and strategy; all in fact that has been invented and imagined to compensate for the absence of commensurate brute force?”

“Let us understand one another;” exclaimed Bonaparte hastily; “I am far from seeking to establish the notion that, with an army inferior in number, victories may not be gained over the mightier mass by which it is opposed; but those victories must be, and ought to be, attributed to the valor and discipline of the troops, to the devotion of their leaders, and perhaps to the

genius of their General-in-Chief. If those victories are decisive the honor of the campaign will of course remain with the weaker army; but should the war become a long one, should it last for several years, I repeat that the lesser number must infallibly yield at last to the greater.

“ Every deviation from the admitted system of warfare gives an advantage to him who first adopts it. Frederic the Great triumphed over all his enemies because he brought to the struggle an entirely new system of warfare; because he opposed to the irregular order of battle pursued by his predecessors his closely-calculated tactics; his regular organization to their imperfect one, and his vigorous discipline to the disorders tolerated in their ranks.

“ We have overcome the school of Frederic because we also have created a system. To his methodical strategy, to his unvarying tactics, all whose results could be foreseen, we have opposed rapid marches and unexpected operations. During the first campaigns of the Republic, the enemy's generals strictly followed the example of Frederic; they delayed all manifestations of hostility until their plans had been thoroughly decided; and never commenced their march before they had carefully studied, and verified by maps, every feature of the country. All their movements were arranged beforehand, and so, consequently, were those of the officers under their command; and whenever they entered into action, the action was for them a mere mathematical problem already determined on, and then and there to be practically solved.

“ What did we oppose to these calculations? Simply

our new system. The enemy had regulated our marches by stages; and, according to their previsions, we were to arrive on a certain day on a certain spot selected by themselves; but as we occasionally accomplished three of these stages within twenty-four hours, they found us close to them three days before they had anticipated our presence, and on a field whose peculiarities and facilities they had not had time to study.

“These learned generals, whenever they decided on an engagement, regulated their advanced lines and their reserve, and adopted all the precautions indicated to them by the science of war; after which it occasionally occurred that some hot-headed colonel of hussars, anxious to secure the epaulettes of a general, no sooner remarked any wavering in the execution of a manœuvre, than he flung himself with seven or eight hundred cavalry upon that particular point, and operated a breach of which the effect was felt to the very extremities of the lines. Whenever such an occurrence as this took place, the opposing generals were completely confused—*the movement had not been anticipated*. It was in this very manner that they lost ten of the battles which we fought against them. An Austrian general whom we took during the campaign in Italy, said to an officer of our own army: ‘I prefer being your prisoner to continuing the war against you; nothing is agreed and arranged as it should be; all science is at an end; and one no longer knows what one is about.’

“During our first campaigns our present system was not the result of conviction, it was merely the very natural consequence of the patriotic ardor and enthu-

siasm of the young soldiers, the young officers, and the young generals of the Republic; experience alone reduced these elements of success into the system which it subsequently became, and to translate the whole matter into words, it may now be said that the Art of War is to consolidate upon a given spot a greater amount of force, and in a shorter period of time, than can be accomplished by the enemy.

“The *real* Art of War is, therefore, to recognise at once on a battle-field the precise position which will decide the engagement; and to bear upon it with a more powerful body of troops than your adversary. Therein consists the secret of a great leader; that is the real genius of war. To crush an enemy weaker than yourself, or to disperse bands of undisciplined marauders, is not the art, it is scarcely the trade; but, with a small army to present invariably to your antagonist a superior force upon the point where he is about to attack you, or where you compel him to attack you, that is genius, and what constitutes the general.

“Frederic resolved war into a science, we have elevated it into an art; it is no longer a calculation, it is a work of genius. And with this battles may be won; triumphs may be secured during four, six, or even eight campaigns; but the army which is really inferior in numbers, must ultimately be beaten, because victories themselves exhaust more slowly, but quite as surely as defeats.”

Was this prophetic of the past?

“The weaker army must;” repeated Bonaparte; “be beaten, as I have already said, unless, indeed, it is attacked on its own soil; but *a nation which permits*

itself to be invaded, is a nation destitute of courage ; for, believe me, Moreau, there is no human power that can suffice to invade a people resolved not to submit to invasion."

Was this prophetic of the future ?

Will his descendant recognise and profit by the warning ?

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRAIN-BEARERS.

ON the occasion of the second marriage of Napoleon, the public journals were ordered to abstain from all comments ; and even any allusion to the subject was prohibited, until an official detail of the ceremonies should be published by Imperial command. To counteract this disappointment, intelligence was surreptitiously furnished by sundry officials of the palace, and pamphlets were rapidly written, which were sold in MS. in the streets in immense numbers.

One of these has fallen into our hands, and we have considered it so curious as to transcribe it here.

We doubt—says the *brochure*—that the official journals will communicate to the public a scene which took place at the Tuileries on the morning of the 1st of April. *Madame-Mère* had assembled around her the Queens of Holland and Naples, the Princesses Elisa and Pauline, and the Kings Louis and Jérôme. A common sorrow had induced a greater intimacy between

Hortense and her sisters-in-law than had ever previously existed; while the necessity of acting in concert, in order to counterbalance the influence of the Austrian Arch-duchess, was admitted by all parties. Under the auspices of Madame Lætitia the discomfited members of the Bonaparte family could speak freely and without fear; and each new arrival stimulated the conversation by an expressed regret or a fresh fraction of intelligence. On this occasion the King of Westphalia was one of the last to join the circle, and he was at once assailed with questions.

“Where is your wife?” asked the Princess Borghèse.

“Which of them?” inquired Jérôme in his turn, with a laugh.

“Oh, the one who is here, of course;” replied Pauline sarcastically; “though, according to the usual order of things, she would only be considered as your mistress.”

“She is dressing.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the Queen of Naples; “she is in great haste to don her harness.”

“You talk idly, Caroline;” said *Madame-Mère*; “it is the duty of her rank; she understands her own dignity; and I am of opinion that splendor of dress must be endured by royal personages as one of the necessities of their position.”

“And what does Your Majesty of Holland think of the Arch-duchess?” asked the Grand-duchess of Tuscany.

“Why should you make such an inquiry of me?” said poor Hortense; “my duty is to be silent.”

“For my part I can see no beauty in her;” sneered Pauline, as she gazed complacently at herself in a large

mirror, in front of which she had placed her chair ; “she is fair, healthy, and fat, like all the German women, but there is no expression in her face ; and I would venture a heavy bet that she has not a particle of intellect.”

“All the better for her ;” remarked the King of Holland gloomily.

“And why, my son ?” demanded *Madame-Mère*.

“Because she will be fortunate enough not to reflect, and may perhaps be able to believe that she is happy.”

“One thing at least is certain ;” said *Madame-Mère* ; “that whether she be dull and ugly, or witty and handsome, the Emperor is madly in love with her.”

“I could have cried with vexation as I watched him ;” exclaimed the Princess Borghèse ; “one might have imagined that he had only just left college.”

“If he becomes enamored of his wife’s ancestors, as well as of his wife herself ;” followed up the Grand-duchess, “he will indeed believe himself to be a real Cæsar.”

“Was he then not one yesterday ?” asked Jérôme ; “in that case, what are we ?”

“Mademoiselle de Beauharnais, who is skilled in heraldry, can inform you ;” said Caroline Murat sharply.

“Oh ;” replied the Queen of Holland with a light laugh ; “people who were nobodies yesterday may become great personages to-day.”

“Mademoiselle de Beauharnais ;” said *Madame-Mère* haughtily ; “my ancestors, since it is necessary to apprise you of the fact, need not yield precedence to yours. You are descended from Frenchmen who were

ennobled only in the seventeenth century, while we trace our origin to the sovereigns of Italy, or perhaps even further back. I am myself the descendant of the Counts of Colalto, and the Beauharnais cannot boast of more."

"My dear mother," yawned Pauline; "pray speak lower; you may chance to awaken Her Majesty the Empress and Queen; and, should she accuse us of giving her the headache, my brother would dismiss us."

"I really am afraid;" whispered the King of Westphalia uneasily; "that we have already been overheard; I can detect hasty footsteps in the gallery; and who can it be except a messenger from Napoleon."

The anxiety became general, but it was terminated by the entrance of the King of Naples. He was attired in a species of tunic of fawn-colored satin, embroidered with silver, and girt about the waist with a blue scarf worked and fringed with gold, over which he wore a purple mantle embroidered with silver, with a collar and lining of ermine, which was confined at the throat by a rich clasp. His sword, whose hilt and sheath sparkled with mixed jewels, was suspended from a belt covered with rubies; while his boots were of purple velvet edged with fur, and decorated with diamond tassels. A cap of the same color as his mantle, and surrounded by an open crown composed of precious stones, was surmounted by a plume of white and fawn-color; while tight pantaloons of white silk, with an inner vest of the same material embroidered in gold, completed his costume. He entered with his head erect, and his face beaming with excitement, his luxuriant

curls of glossy black hair falling low upon his neck ; and in his hand he held a printed paper, which he was waving to and fro.

“What a magnificent dress !” was the general exclamation.

“Yes, I flatter myself ;” said Murat, following the example of the Princess Borghèse, and admiring himself in an enormous glass by which his whole figure was reflected ; “that for a morning costume this is presentable enough.”

“And you will soon learn how dear it will cost you,” observed *Madame-Mère* with a sigh.

“But let us talk of something else ;” said the *beau sabreur* more seriously ; “we have a graver subject to discuss. Which of the family was aware of what I read half an hour ago in the *Journal de l'Empire* ?”

“What was it ?” was instantly asked.

“That we are about to be disgraced in the eyes of all Europe ; and that the royal dignity will be degraded in our persons.”

“How ?” was the next inquiry ; “What is required of us ?”

“Read, *Mesdames les Reines* ;” replied Murat ; “and you will learn that, all queens as you are, you will to-morrow, in the chapel of the Louvre, during the marriage ceremony, have the honor of bearing the train of the Imperial mantle of your august sister-in-law.”

“Impossible ! It is the mere gossip of the public prints ! Napoleon can never seek to insult us by such a request !” was the indignant rejoinder.

“There is no question of a *request* ;” said the King

of Westphalia ; “the Emperor has issued a *command*.”

“Here is the programme of the procession, drawn up and signed by the grand-master of the ceremonies,” said Louis.

“Has he forgotten that *my* wife is the daughter of the King of Wurtemberg ?” exclaimed Jérôme.

“As for me,” cried the Princess Borghèse ; “I will die sooner than touch her odious mantle.”

“Do not excite yourself, sister ;” said Caroline Murat ; “this matter concerns neither you nor the Grand-duchess ; you are neither of you queens.”

“But I am more than a *parvenue* queen ;” gasped Pauline, choking with rage ; “I am noble, both on my own side, and on that of my husband.”

“*Belle-sœur* ;” laughed Murat ; “you are impertinent.”

The Grand-duchess burst into tears.

“Pauline is right ;” she exclaimed angrily ; “the pride of your wife is insufferable ; she is constantly throwing her royalty in our teeth. Is it our fault if Napoleon would not give a close crown to our husbands ? and must it be rendered an object of envy to us from morning to night.”

“Poor Elisa, dry your tears,” sighed the King of Holland ; “and believe me when I assure you that a crown is, at the best, a thorny head-dress.”

“Perhaps so ;” said Murat gaily ; “but I confess that it sits easily enough on me.”

“I, for one, will not officiate as the waiting woman of my sister-in-law :” observed his wife in a tone of decision.

“Nor will I permit it ;” cried her husband ; “and I now distinctly forbid you to do anything of the sort without my authority.”

“If you are all only as firm as I shall be ;” said Pauline, “Ségur may swallow his programme ; and if he dares to propose such a degradation to me, he will not soon forget his reception.”

“Her Imperial Majesty is in no want of either ladies or chamberlains,” tartly remarked the Grand-Duchess.

“I could not venture to hint at such a degradation to *my* wife ;” murmured Jérôme.

“Sons and daughters, son-in-law and daughter-in-law,” interposed *Madame-Mère* ; “bear in mind that Napoléoné is accustomed to be obeyed. He is decidedly wrong on this occasion ; but if he is resolved, you will obey.”

“The others may do so, but I shall not ;” persisted the Princess Borghèse.

“You, like the rest,” was the dry response.

“Rather than submit to such an indignity I would unsheathe my sword,” declaimed Murat theatrically.

“Murato ! Murato !” said the old lady, with a sagacious shake of the head ; “you are a brave man in battle, but in the presence of Napoléoné you are no better than a coward.”

A burst of laughter greeted this sally, in which the King of Naples joined as heartily as the rest ; and just as the sudden mirth was at its height, the folding-doors of the room were flung back with considerable violence, and the usher on duty announced :

“THE EMPEROR !”

At this terrible word the mice all looked round for

some hole in which they might hide themselves, but failed to find one; and meanwhile Napoleon, always affectionate and respectful towards his mother, approached her and touched her forehead with his lips; he then gave a friendly tap on the cheek to the Queen of Holland; inquired after the health of Louis; and, finally, having scrutinised the whole group like a man who suspected the subject which had been under discussion, he demanded to know of what they had been conversing, and if it was to be kept a secret from him?

Murat wore, as we have stated, a handsome sword, but it remained in its glittering sheath; the stoical Louis turned away; Jérôme made knots in his handkerchief, and entrenched himself behind the arm-chair of *Madame-Mère*; Hortense drooped her head; the Grand-duchess of Tuscany and the Queen of Naples began to cry: and Pauline alone murmured a few unintelligible words.

“Madame la Princesse Borghèse;” thundered out Napoleon; “explain instantly what all this means.”

“My sisters and I do not think proper to carry the mantle of your wife;” she articulated with considerable difficulty.

“What! Do you all refuse?” asked the Emperor sternly.

“I cannot disgrace my crown;” sobbed out the Queen of Naples.

“And I will not publicly outrage my unhappy mother;” said Hortense.

“Admirable!” exclaimed Napoleon. “And you, Elisa? You doubtless dread the reproaches of your husband. Have I rightly understood you all? Ladies,

what did I owe to you when I was called upon to reign over France? A competent fortune, and a title for your husbands would then have satisfied your ambition; and you would neither have accused me of injustice, nor aspired to a higher rank. What have I done? I have placed you all on such a giddy elevation that it has turned your heads. I have bestowed upon your husbands and yourselves what perhaps belonged only to the nation; kingdoms, principalities, and splendid establishments; I have overwhelmed you with wealth and honors; and now, instead of endeavoring to prove your gratitude, you accuse me of seeking to degrade you. What are you without me? Which of you could sustain yourself if I did not stretch out my hand to support you? Oh! so this is the tone that you assume. Your thrones belong to you by feudal right? Mark me, ladies—the Arch-chancellor of State shall make to you, or rather to your husbands, an official declaration; and whichever one among you ventures to disobey my commands, shall be considered as a felon, and put under the ban of the Empire.”

Napoleon pronounced his decision with a vehemence which was absolutely frightful. His chest heaved, his eyes became haggard, and his lips grew livid with passion.

No one dared to speak for several moments; but at length the King of Naples, somewhat wounded at having been confounded with the other brothers of the Emperor, who had done nothing for the glory of the French arms, ventured to say:—

“I had hoped that my services, and my conduct in the field, gave me a right—”

“To what, Monsieur?” demanded the Emperor impetuously. “To the bâton of a Marshal of France, at the utmost. Have you surpassed Masséna, Lannes, Davoust, Kellerman? Answer me that—Lefèvre, Pérignon, or even Soult? Most certainly not; and therefore, in strict justice, I should have crowned them before you. You owe your royalty only to the fact that you are my brother-in-law; and if I were not at hand to aid you, how long would you remain upon your throne? Your safety and prosperity depend on mine. Kings and queens, return to your duty—yield to my commands, or take the consequences. As regards you, Madame Borghèse, who honor us by your alliance, as soon as the marriage fêtes have terminated, you will leave Paris; and as you first gave the signal of resistance, so you shall be the first to obey. It is my express determination that the Empress Arch-duchess of Austria shall receive all the homage due to her birth and rank.”

Having thus spoken, Napoleon terminated the scene by carrying off the three kings; after having again kissed his mother upon the forehead, and glanced angrily at Hortense, whose deprecatory look, however, disarmed him; and something like a shadow passed over his brow as his lips wreathed themselves into a faint smile which had a touch of sadness in its expression.

Meanwhile the Princess Borghèse was suffocating; and, as the Emperor disappeared, she fell upon the floor in violent hysterics; but Napoleon having, on being apprised of the fact, sent his physician Corvisart to her assistance, who informed her that it was the

command of the Emperor that she should be perfectly recovered before the next day, she had no alternative save to swallow the sedatives which were prescribed for her, and to resign herself to her fate.

The Queens of Naples and Holland, and the Grand-duchess of Tuscany, had no resource save tears; but M. de Ségur having assured them that the ceremonial against which they had revolted, was observed in all the sovereign houses of Europe, they at length consented to submit.

That, although there may have been considerable exaggeration in the details furnished by this extraordinary pamphlet, its main facts were perfectly correct, became subsequently patent; as it was ascertained that one of the ladies of the court, who was present during the discussion, and who was shrewd enough to feel convinced that, resist as they might, they would never have sufficient influence to counteract that of a young bride whom the imperious conqueror of Italy loved with all the ardor of a school-boy, lost no time in communicating to Marie Louise all the details of the struggle, and the natural consequence ensued. The haughty daughter of the Cæsars, who considered herself degraded by a marriage forced upon her by a political necessity, had from the first felt, and even exhibited, a contempt for the Bonaparte family which the recital of her indiscreet attendant augmented to positive scorn; and from that moment she condescended to honor them with her ill-will. The Princess Borghèse and Queen Hortense, who in private she always designated as "the old woman's daughter,"

were especially the objects of her hatred; nor could she ever be prevailed upon to utter one kind or sympathising word on the subject of the gentle and loving Josephine who for her sake had been sacrificed; a pertinacity that alienated from her the hearts of the nation, which still remembered with affection and regret the acts of benevolence and goodness of their first Empress.

The fatal mantle which was destined to produce so much bitterness and dissension, was upwards of twelve yards in length, and had been scrupulously copied from those of the ancient Queens of France, both in size and material; and it was decided that its train was to be borne by the sisters and sisters-in-law of the Emperor throughout the whole length of the gallery which connected the Tuileries and the Louvre. And thus much is certain, that however convincing the eloquence of M. Ségur might have proved in enforcing the obedience of the Imperial and Royal train-bearers, it did not suffice to prevent their betraying how deeply they felt the degradation to which they were subjected.

During their act of vassalage tears streamed down the cheeks of the mortified and humbled princesses, which they made no attempt to conceal; and which produced a painful impression on the spectators.

One child, of about ten years of age, who was earnestly gazing on the gorgeous spectacle, was overheard whispering to his mother: "Mamma, why does the Queen of Holland cry? I thought that queens were always laughing; for you know that every one says 'as happy as a king.'" "

Alas, poor Hortense! She was fated to shed many, and more bitter tears. Those which fell that day were wept for an outraged mother; but other days were to come when she had cause to weep over herself.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DANCE OF DEATH.

THE marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise of Austria was solemnised in the commencement of the year 1810; and shortly after the ceremony the Emperor left Paris for Compiègne, whence the Imperial couple proceeded to Belgium, arriving at Brussels at the close of the month, where they held an official reception. On the first of May they entered Antwerp in state, and finally returned through Dunkirk, Lille, Havre, and Rouen, to Paris.

Throughout the whole of their progress they were received with acclamations, while showers of bouquets, avalanches of official addresses, and groves of triumphal arches greeted them on all sides. Had the cold-blooded Austrian Empress possessed the heart of the sensitive woman whom she had supplanted, that heart must have grown heavy within her as she reflected that those who had been so long governed by her own ancestors were now striving to outvie each other in demonstrations of attachment to the man by whom they had been divested of so fair a portion of their empire;

but Marie Louise was only wearied, not saddened, by her triumphal passage through the forfeited territories of the Hapsburgs; where the inventive genius of the inhabitants had suggested no other tokens of welcome than the monotonous ones already named. There was, however, one small town which as the travellers approached it had, as they instantly perceived, ventured upon a slight innovation on the universal rule. The inevitable arch formed of green branches, more or less artistically arranged, spanned the road as usual, but in addition to the usual banners, it was surmounted by another bearing an inscription in gigantic letters.

“What have we here?” exclaimed the Emperor, anxious to reawaken the waning interest of his young bride; “Messieurs;” he added to the equerries who rode beside his carriage; “desire the postilions to slacken their pace when we are within a few paces of the arch before us.”

He was obeyed, and a slight breeze expanding the folds of the banner, he read, with as much amusement as curiosity, the two following lines:—

“ Il n'a pas fait une méprise,
En épousant Marie Louise.”

For a moment both himself and the Empress gave free vent to their mirth; but ere they reached the gate of the town where the municipal body were waiting to receive them, and to deliver their address of congratulation, Napoleon had recovered his composure; and waving his hand to the official who was already unfolding his paper, and clearing his throat to do all due honor to the important document, he said gravely:—

“One moment, Monsieur, if you please. Let your mayor be presented to me.”

The chief magistrate approached under the escort of an aide-de-camp, bowing to the ground, and evidently trembling in every limb.

“Monsieur le Maire;” said Napoleon, in his most gracious accents; “the congratulations which you were about to offer to the Empress and myself, we are anxious to reciprocate, as we perceive that you boast a poet in your borough.”

“Your Imperial Majesty does us too much honor;” stammered out the agitated functionary.

“By no means;” replied the Emperor; “It is the especial privilege of sovereigns to pay their tribute of praise to genius. We desire to see your poet, and to thank him for the loyalty which inspired his fancy.”

As these words were uttered by Napoleon, a second figure detached itself from the group before him, and advanced towards the carriage. It was that of a fat, unwieldy, shapeless burgomaster in his civic robes, with a heavy chain of gold about his neck, lack-lustre eyes, and a pendant chin. On the stage his appearance would have elicited a roar of laughter, but the countenance of the Emperor remained impassive.

“Monsieur le poëte;” he said blandly; “you have conferred a great obligation on the town which is so happy as to number you among its inhabitants, and particularly upon its official body; as the distich for which they are indebted to you far transcends any address that they could have presented to my illustrious bride and myself; and we consequently accept it in lieu of that which they intended to deliver. To

assure you, moreover, of the gratification we have derived from the very graceful and ingenious production of your muse ;” he continued, taking from his waistcoat pocket an ebony snuff-box bearing his cypher in small brilliants upon the lid ; “ I request that you will accept this from me—and

‘ Boire, en prenant là une prise,
A la santé de Marie Louise—’

Au revoir, Messieurs ! En avant, postilions !”

And to the astonishment and consternation of the worthy mayor and burgomasters, the cavalcade was instantly in motion ; and the splendid procession swept through the narrow street of their ancient borough with a speed which soon carried carriages and horsemen out of sight.

“ There was a snuff-box well-bestowed !” exclaimed Napoleon, as he threw himself back on his seat with a burst of laughter, and turned towards the Empress ; “ It has made a simpleton happy ; turned the Emperor of the French into a rhymester ; and, above all, delivered you from the fatigue and weariness of listening to a string of phrases without either sense or grammar.”

On the first of June the Imperial couple were once more in Paris, which was in a turmoil of gaiety and dissipation in honor of their nuptials ; and where the fêtes given by Prince Kourakin were the theme of every circle.

The Russian Ambassador was a man of taste and gallantry, who entertained his distinguished guests with a magnificence which elicited the admiration of all Paris. His hôtel was one of the finest in the city, and

he had caused it to be furnished in the most luxurious manner ; his banquets were unrivalled both in arrangement and variety ; in short, everything about him was perfect save his person. Enormously stout, and strikingly ugly, he rendered himself still more conspicuous by constantly appearing in a coat of cloth of gold, blazing with diamonds ; a costume which made him appear, in a room where he alone was so attired, like an actor about to enact a comic part at the theatre. When once, however, those who were presented to him had become accustomed to his grotesque appearance, it was difficult either to ridicule or to dislike him, as his manners were fascinating, his conversation brilliant, and his deportment towards the other sex at once gentle and respectful ; qualities in which most of the nobility of that period were sadly deficient. He always observed one Russian custom, which was that of opening every ball with the woman of the highest rank in the room, and it was generally with the Duchess of Bassano that he walked the Polonoise.

The most eventful entertainment offered to the Emperor and his bride was, however, that of the Prince of Schwartzemberg, the Austrian Ambassador, who, on the 1st of July, received not only their Majesties, but the whole court—at the hôtel Montesson, where he had taken up his residence.

The preparations were sumptuous ; and invitations were issued not only to the court circle, but also to the principal inhabitants of Paris, and to all foreigners of distinction who chanced to be residing there ; and eager were the entreaties of those whose names had been omitted, but who considered themselves entitled to

figure in the brilliant throng, to obtain one of the magical cards which would secure their admission.

The fête was magnificent, but the prince, in order to secure his popularity, had yielded too carelessly to the requests by which he was assailed on all sides, and it was soon ascertained that his hôtel would be utterly incapable of containing the number of guests invited. He consequently caused an immense building to be erected in the middle of the garden ; a complete palace, in which there were private rooms for the convenience of the Empress and her attendants ; but, unfortunately, the whole of the vast construction consisted of pine-wood washed over with turpentine, and entirely covered with oilcloth. The interior was hung with silk draperies wrought with gold ; while garlands of artificial flowers, and festoons of muslin and gauze, were suspended from the exterior portico.

The carriages of the court arrived in rapid succession ; the vast hall was soon filled to overflowing ; and hidden voices and instruments ere long announced the appearance of their Majesties.

The Empress wore a white dress with a running pattern of gold sprinkled with rubies, and a blue mantle embroidered with diamonds, pearls, and gold ; her girdle, her necklace, her bracelets, and her clasps, all of inestimable price, were composed of the richest of the crown-jewels ; while on her head blazed a diadem and a close crown of diamonds. Never before had her attire been so gorgeous, or her features so animated ; she was the very embodiment of happiness ; nor did the Emperor appear less satisfied than herself ; but conversed with every one about him with an amenity

which he seldom displayed, and with a familiarity which was still more rare.

Finding himself near an auditor of the Council of State, who had only recently received his appointment, he asked him if he had selected a partner.

“Sire ;” said the astonished young man, “I never dance.”

“I am sorry to hear it, *Morsieur* ;” was the reply ; “every one ought to be useful, even in a ball-room, when they are in my service. Engage a dancing-master, and I will invite you to display your progress at the Tuileries next winter.”

As Napoleon moved away, smiling at the embarrassment he had created, his victim said with a sad simplicity to those about him :—

“Could anything be more unfortunate ! Had His Majesty questioned me on any other subject—on the affairs of the administration, on science, in mathematics, or in history, I could have given him a satisfactory reply ; but, as ill luck would have it, he talked to me of dancing, about which I know nothing. Never was man so unlucky as I am !”

“*Monsieur* ;” replied one of the chamberlains of the Emperor who overheard his words ; “you should have remembered the proverb. ‘They should not go to the wine-shop who will not drink, nor those to the gaming-house who will not play.’ Learn to dance, for it is not every one who can dance at the Tuileries.”

As he continued his tour round the room, Napoleon found himself near the widow and daughter of *Monsieur de Bonchamp*, the celebrated soldier who gained so high a reputation in *La Vendée*. Made-

moiselle Zoë de Bonchamp had just received from the Prince-Primate the cross of a Chanoinesse, and she seized the opportunity when the Emperor addressed her, to request his permission to wear it. At that period all that related to La Vendée was welcome to Napoleon, and he consequently acceded to the entreaty most graciously: "Save, indeed;" he added archly; "that it should prevent your taking a husband, which, however, I presume that it does not."

Meanwhile, refreshments were handed round, and the dances succeeded each other without intermission, while the elder guests were awaiting the announcement of the supper, which was laid in another part of the hôtel. The sky was heavy, and the heat, augmented by the illumination, excessive, and almost stifling, when suddenly a breeze sprang up, which was joyfully welcomed; for the gardens, as light as day from the myriad lamps which were suspended on all sides, were as much crowded as the saloons. Suddenly a loud cry was heard, even above the music of the orchestra. One of the gauze festoons, displaced by the sudden current of air, had swept across a girandole, and taken fire at a taper. An aide-de-camp of the Prince of Neufchâtel, hoping to check the evil at once, sprang up the column, caught the blazing drapery, and endeavored to tear it down; but his efforts were vain, and he only succeeded in separating it into several fragments, which, escaping from his grasp, ignited the hangings in two other directions.

The first witnesses of the accident, apprehending more serious consequences, applied for such assistance as might, if procured in time, have dissipated all cause

for alarm, but not the slightest precaution against such a catastrophe had been taken ; and in the meantime the fire was spreading with frightful rapidity, everything upon which it seized giving it additional strength—the light planking imbued with turpentine, the gauzes, and muslins, all served to feed the ravenous flames which wreathed themselves like fiery snakes round the whole building. In five minutes, all was one wide blaze.

The misfortune which had occurred was, for a time, known only to those who were present in the temporary saloon, but suddenly the report spread without, and the fearful cry of "Fire!" was heard in all directions ; when, by some inexplicable fatality, a mass of persons, not aware in what quarter the fire had broken out, rushed into the blazing ball-room, and on perceiving the progress of the flames, shrieked to its occupants to escape. At these cries, the terror became general ; every individual in the crowd pressed madly to and fro, seeking those who were dearest to them, and creating a confusion from which it was impossible to extricate themselves. The scene of terror below was equalled by that above ; the flames spread rapidly and fiercely ; and, fed by the abundant draperies, attacked the roof of the building, shivered the huge mirrors, detached the chandeliers which fell in a rain of glass to the floor, and threatened the entire destruction of the edifice.

The Empress was, at that particular moment, separated from the Emperor, and might, without much difficulty, have effected her escape alone ; but with a courage which she never exhibited in France, save on this occasion, she turned towards the throne, ascended

the steps, and there awaited her husband without exhibiting one trace of fear. In another second, Napoleon rushed to her side, grasped her arm, and, preceded by several of his faithful attendants, succeeded in rescuing her from her frightful peril; when, having placed her in the first carriage he could procure, he accompanied her on horseback to the palace of the Elysée. This duty accomplished, he at once returned to the scene of the catastrophe, in order to stimulate the efforts of those who were endeavoring to extinguish the flames; but it was already too late; a few minutes had sufficed; the building existed no longer; and nothing remained of the fairy palace which had, only an hour before, presented the appearance of some creation from the wand of an enchanter, save a heap of ruin and of dead!

Never had the Emperor appeared so worthy of his world-wide reputation as he did at this terrible moment; he seemed to be possessed of ubiquity, and to be everywhere at once; utterly regardless of his own safety, he leapt into the midst of the still burning ruins in order to rescue the maimed and shrieking victims who were unable to extricate themselves; and even amid the horrors of the scene poured forth words of encouragement and hope which lessened the terror of the victims.

The sufferings occasioned by this conflagration were fearful; and among those who did not actually lose their lives, the hurts received by Prince Kourakin ultimately proved to have been the most severe; as, in endeavoring to escape from the burning building, he had fallen at the foot of the steps which led to the grand entrance, and all the persons who succeeded in

saving themselves passed over his prostrate body; thus he was not only much burnt, but owing to his great size, was bruised from head to foot so seriously that his life was for a time despaired of; and several months actually elapsed ere he could dispense with the care and attendance of the celebrated surgeon Dubois; whom, with his usual munificence, he rewarded on his recovery with a gold snuff-box, enriched by his cypher in brilliants, and containing a hundred thousand francs in bank notes.

More than fourteen persons perished at this fatal entertainment. The Princess de la Leyen, sister-in-law to the prince-primate, was among the number; as well as the Princess Joseph of Schwartzemberg, who bore the same relation to the Austrian Ambassador. The latter died a victim to her maternal affection; as, on missing her young and beautiful daughter from her side, she rushed into the midst of the flames in search of her, and herself met the frightful death which her beloved child had escaped.

The appearance of the garden during the night was frightful! The once brilliant light of the illuminations was lost amid the blaze of the conflagration; women, sparkling with diamonds, and attired in sumptuous dresses, were flying from the dreadful enemy which appeared to be pursuing them; and more than one among them was drowned in the marble basin of the fountain, into which they had either fallen fainting in their terror, or had precipitated themselves to escape the flames which had fastened on their garments. Nothing could be heard save cries of agony or groans of despair, wrung from the mutilated sufferers who were

unable to extricate themselves from their perilous situation ; mothers shrieking out the names of their children, wives of their husbands, and fathers of their sons. The number of wounded was considerable, being estimated at upwards of a hundred. Among the rest, of one family who had come from Baden expressly to attend this fête, one member only survived the catastrophe ; the other five perished either in the fire, or a few days subsequently, of their wounds.

The fury of the flames was so great that the Queen of Naples, who was following the Imperial couple from the ball-room, chancing to fall, was indebted for her life to the presence of mind of the Grand Duke of Wurtzburg, who having succeeded in saving her from being trampled on, gave her into the arms of the King of Westphalia and Count Metternich, who conveyed her to a place of safety.

The Vice-Queen of Italy was pregnant ; and Prince Eugène, fearing that she might meet with some accident, and believing that the danger was not so imminent as it was thought to be, remained with her for some time at the upper end of the saloon, in order to prevent the crowd from pressing upon her, when he hoped to be able to retire with her in time ; but he soon discovered that there was no chance of escape by the principal door, from the constant falling of the chandeliers and lustres, by which they must have been crushed on their passage.

For a moment he was transfixed with horror ; his wife had fainted in his arms ; and nothing save a frightful death appeared to await them both, when he suddenly remembered that a sliding panel had been

opened near the throne, which he had remarked at the commencement of the evening, when his attention was attracted by the movement of the drapery and the entrance through the aperture of an attendant. Not a moment was to be lost; with an eager hand he tore back the hangings, discovered the panel so providentially provided for his own safety and that of one whom he loved far more than himself, thrust it open, and bore his still insensible burthen into the open air.

Prince Joseph of Schwartzenberg passed the entire night in seeking his wife, whom he found neither at the Austrian Embassy nor at the hôtel of the Countess Metternich; but he refused to believe in his bereavement until daybreak, when a mutilated body was found among the ruins, which was instantly recognised as that of the devoted and ill-fated mother—not a doubt could moreover exist, as the jewels which were still attached to her neck and arms too plainly proclaimed the fearful truth.

The unfortunate princess was the daughter of the Duke of Aremberg, at that period a senator, and was the parent of eight children. Distinguished equally by the grace of her person, the excellence of her heart, and the superiority of her intellect, her miserable fate was sincerely wept by her friends, and caused universal regret.

As a natural consequence, the tragical event which we have endeavored to describe elicited a thousand rumors, each more absurd and improbable than the last; and some evil-minded men even ventured to assert that England, in concert with Austria, had been the author of the fire, in which both nations had hoped

to annihilate the Emperor and his relatives! This atrocious accusation could not, however, obtain credence even among the most virulent enemies of England. What purpose could she have had to destroy Napoleon? She who alone of all the European nations had never bent beneath his yoke, or feared his frown?—while, as regarded Austria, the calumny was still more monstrous. Had these moral murderers forgotten that, in becoming the wife of the French Emperor, Marie Louise had not ceased to be the daughter of Francis, and that she must have been involved in the common destruction?

Originate from what cause it might—and there cannot be an instant's doubt that the cause was purely accidental—the omen was a sad one. The ill-starred Marie Antoinette was greeted on her arrival in France with the most awful storm that had been witnessed for years, and she perished on a scaffold. Marie Louise had her welcome baptised in fire, and her end was even less enviable. In the one case, death; in the other dishonor!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MARSHAL-DUKE AND THE BANKER.

As the Imperial Court became less and less accessible to those whose wealth alone entitled them to hope for admission to the palace, so did that honor become more and more an object of ambition; but many who, under

an hereditary monarchy, would have found little difficulty in securing an entrance to the charmed circle, were excluded under that of a *parvenu* sovereign, whose jealousy of intrusion, and anxiety to maintain his dignity to its full extent, rendered him more fastidious. It was easy to trace the effect to its cause, although this fact by no means reconciled the excluded to the privation of so desirable an opportunity of displaying their opulence in the eyes of the courtiers.

The few who, for reasons of his own, the Emperor consented to receive, might, however, had they seen fit to do so, have convinced the discontented that they themselves paid dearly for the distinction which had been accorded to them; for, if the denizens of the Faubourg Saint Germain indulged in certain displays of insolent superiority towards the noblesse of the Empire, these in turn were as little delicate in assuming airs of ostentatious disdain when brought into contact with the heavy purses and gorgeous jewels of the mere financial grandees. They were, however, as a natural consequence, silent on such a subject; and even if it were occasionally suspected by their friends, the latter were by no means deterred from exerting all their energies to place themselves in the same position, while, strangely enough, even while struggling with a pertinacity worthy a better cause, to attain their object, they never ceased asking, "Who was Napoleon? Who was Josephine? What right had they to despise and neglect those who were their equals by birth?" unconscious that to this very fact their disappointment was to be attributed; and that had the Emperor and Empress whom they thus affected to disdain been born "under

the purple," they could have afforded to extend their condescension much further.

Among his untitled guests, the most welcome to Napoleon, and the most respected by those about him, was M. Estève, who ultimately became Treasurer to the Crown, and a Count of the Empire; but this estimable man unhappily lost his reason, a circumstance which was generally attributed to the fact of his Imperial master having resolutely refused to invest him with a dukedom; although his personal friends did not hesitate to affirm that this overweening ambition, and not its failure, was the first symptom of his malady.

Be that as it might, however, the anecdote which we are about to relate, has for its hero an individual not altogether unconnected with the temporary vacancy caused by the painful malady of the unfortunate count.

Among the monied men who aspired to the dignities of the Imperial Court, the most conspicuous was a banker named P—, a worthy person enough, but vain to excess; and affecting democratical principles even while he was pining for the opportunity of becoming a courtier. From constant contact with the *noblesse* in his business, he had finished by believing that he was himself of high extraction, and his ambition led him to hope for an appointment in the household of the Emperor.

This was, however, by no means easy of attainment; and he had almost begun to despair of success, when he determined to confide his project to the Marshal-duke de R—, whose improvidence had, on more than one occasion, compelled him to have recourse to the good offices of the wealthy banker.

“My dear Sir;” said the marshal in reply; “I feel satisfied that the Emperor will be delighted to see a man of your importance at his court. That must be our first step. He must see you, and be enabled to estimate your worth, before anything more can be done. I will mention you to him; and I have no doubt that a few days hence he will summon you to the palace.”

A week or two subsequently, the marshal, who, as we need scarcely say, had altogether forgotten M. P—— and his project, chanced to meet him in the gardens of the Tuileries; when, finding that there was no escape, and suddenly recalling to mind the promise that he had made, he accosted him with great apparent warmth.

“Nothing was ever more unfortunate!” he exclaimed, after they had exchanged salutations; “I have not been able to obtain an audience of the Emperor since we last parted; and, for obvious reasons, I do not consider it expedient to mention your wish before witnesses. There are so many jealousies, and so much intriguing at court, that were our purpose to become known, you would inevitably be forestalled; so that you have no alternative but to wait patiently until I can secure a favorable moment.”

M. P—— expressed his acknowledgments.

“Rest assured, M. le Maréchal;” he said gratefully; “that this is an obligation which I shall never forget, and for which I shall not prove ungrateful. I cannot doubt that when you represent to His Imperial Majesty the antiquity of my family, and my power to serve him financially whenever he may condescend to accept my

services, he will at once see that I am not an ineligible person to admit to his presence."

"*Pardi!* I should think not, indeed!" was the rejoinder of his military patron; "and I can the better sympathise in your anxiety, as I am very far from easy in my mind myself, for I am just now furiously short of money."

The banker, caught in his own trap, affected for a moment not to have heard the remark; then a doubt presented itself that he should be acting like a wise man, were he, at so critical a moment, to forfeit the friendship of his improvident companion for a few thousands of francs; and, having rapidly convinced himself to the contrary, he walked aside for a few seconds, and returned with a small pocket-book containing thirty thousand livres in his hand, of which he begged the marshal to accept the loan until he should receive his revenues.

His request was cheerfully granted, with an assurance that the sum so gracefully tendered should be repaid without delay; but as nothing was further from the intention of the recipient than suffering the contents of the pocket-book to return to their original owner, he determined to cancel the debt by informing Napoleon of the request which had been made to him by the accommodating banker.

"Do you imagine that I am anxious to turn my court into a Stock-Exchange, M. le Maréchal?" asked the Emperor; "I desire that the subject may never again be mooted between us."

M. P—— was, however, a pertinacious pleader, and refused to consider himself beaten even by this pe-

remptory declaration, Imperial though it was ; and the Marshal began to feel that he was paying too high a price for his thirty thousand francs, when he almost daily received a visit from his creditor, urging him once more to advocate his cause. His invention was sorely taxed to vary and render even commonly plausible the statements by which he was compelled to soothe his impatience ; and at length, in order to impress on him the conviction that the hope of court favor was beginning to dawn upon him, the poor worried marshal, *de guerre lasse*, resolved to pay him a formal visit at his own house.

This proved an evil inspiration for the unlucky banker, as this distinguished visitor was necessarily presented to Madame P——, one of the loveliest and most accomplished women in Paris. Young, blooming, finely formed, and full of graceful gaiety, she was a general favorite, and secured the admiration and regard of all around her. Dazzled by her extraordinary beauty, the gallant marshal lost no opportunity of endeavoring to secure her favor, but his defeat was a signal one ; nor was it long before he discovered that the bright eyes which refused all response to his own glances, were infinitely less rigorous towards General F—— S—— ; whereupon he without loss of time decided on a plan of action in which, bold and extravagant as it was, he felt certain of success.

“ My good friend,” he one day whispered confidentially to the husband of the young beauty ; “ we have at last succeeded. The Emperor has pledged himself that he will confer on you the appointment of Treasurer to the Crown, in place of the Count d’Estève, whose lunacy is now confirmed.”

“Ah, M. le Duc, allow me to embrace you;” exclaimed the overjoyed banker; “you have made me the happiest man in France! I will immediately order my court-dress. Is not the mantle *feuille morte* embroidered with silver?—and when shall I be required to take the oath?”

“Calm yourself, M. le Trésorier-general;” said the marshal, who began to be alarmed by the impetuosity of his dupe; “you must be calm and prudent. As I have already informed you, it is decided that you are to succeed to the honorable functions of the unfortunate Estève, but only on one condition.”

“Name it—I care not what may be its nature—it shall be observed;” cried M. P—— breathlessly.

“It is, however, one of so singular—I had almost said of so cruel a nature;” replied the duke gravely; “that I have scarcely courage to make it known to you.”

“Never mind, never mind; do not keep me in suspense;” gasped out his companion; “this is no moment for false delicacy. Does our immortal Emperor wish to test forthwith my power to serve the interests of his treasury?”

“Not precisely.”

“Because otherwise—”

“There was no question of a loan, I assure you, upon my honor.”

“Then tantalise me no longer, I entreat of you, M. le Maréchal; it is not difficult to comply with a condition by which one is to become Treasurer to the Crown.”

“Well, since you insist that I shall accomplish my mission,” said the duke, as if with reluctance, “I am

compelled to tell you that this favor is accorded to Madame P——, and not to yourself. You cannot conceive the enthusiasm with which he speaks of her.”

“The devil! This is unfortunate indeed;” sighed the astonished man of money. “Of course I do not pretend to misunderstand you; but nothing could have been more unlucky; for I do assure you, M. le duc, that I love my wife.”

“In that case,” said his tormentor phlegmatically; “you will of course decline the honor which is awaiting you; but I must entreat that you will not cease to remember that my best influence was exerted in your behalf.”

“Rest assured, M. le Marechal, that I shall bear it in memory to the last hour of my existence; but it is really a pity that Madame P—— should be precisely the person to captivate his fancy. There are so many pretty women in Paris, *mon digne Monsieur*.”

“Not a doubt of it,” replied his inexorable debtor. “It is a fatal chance certainly.”

“Well;” said the banker gloomily, “then there is an end of the one dream of my existence. I must decline the office on those terms.”

“I regret it for your sake,” was the reply, “as I am sorry to say that I cannot further interfere in the affair.”

M. P—— fell into a profound reverie, which the Marshal made no attempt to disturb; but ere long he again spoke:—

“I have been thinking,” he said sententiously; “that this appointment would not only give me a high position at the court, but that it would also confer great

distinction upon my wife, who would become Madame la Tresorière, and have her *entrées* like myself; and, under the circumstances, if I am called upon to make a sacrifice, I am surely entitled to demand that she should make one likewise."

"There cannot be a doubt of it."

"The costume is superb, is it not, M. le Duc?"

"Magnificent! and peculiarly adapted to a person of your height and figure."

"I can well believe it—but still—"

"I suspect that should you accept the appointment," interposed the marshal, "the favor of the Emperor would be secured to you, and that the cordon of the Legion of Honor would not be long ere it adorned your breast."

"The cordon of the Legion of Honor, M. le Duc?"

"Yes; and not only that distinction, but also Imperial demonstrations of confidence and esteem which could not fail to make you an object of envy to the whole court. M. P—— you are a man of sense and sentiment—you are a philosopher; and you should not forget for an instant either the greatness of the personage with whom you have to deal, or the fact that when husbands are wise they never see or hear anything of which they are supposed to be ignorant. Act as they do; and consider yourself peculiarly favored that while many a countess and baroness has smiled upon her valet, Madame P—— will have the honor of contributing to the happiness of the most powerful sovereign in Europe."

"There is certainly some truth in what you advance;" said the discomfited banker; "but still—"

“He hesitates,” murmured the marshal beneath his breath; “so my point is gained.” And then he added aloud:—

“I must, however, tell you that the Emperor is annoyed to see General S—— F—— constantly loitering about your house.”

“It vexes me also;” replied his companion; “and I shall request him to remain at home.”

“That will be your most prudent course, my good friend; but you must act as if solely influenced by your own good feelings—let nothing be suspected; for the Emperor detests all publicity in delicate affairs of this nature.”

Having so far carried his point, the duke rose, took his leave, and retired; while M. P—— anxious to fit on his court-suit with as little delay as possible, made his way at once to the apartment of his wife, where, without any preface, he proceeded to inform her that the visits of the general were extremely disagreeable to him as the master of the house; and not only to himself, but also to a valuable friend whose feelings he would not wound for the world.

“And what friend of yours, may I ask, Monsieur;” demanded Madame P——; “can be interested in the movements of the general?”

“One, Madame, I repeat, whose wishes I am bound alike by inclination and by duty to hold sacred—I allude to the Emperor.”

“To the Emperor, Monsieur!” echoed the lady, starting from her seat.”

“Yes; Madame, to Napoleon himself. Is it my fault that he admires you!”

Poor Madame P—— could not expostulate; she had reasons of her own for receiving this startling assurance without any great demonstration of indignant virtue; and her husband had scarcely left the room before a thousand ambitious projects were whirling through her brain; while, as a woman who really loves can never keep a secret from the object of her affection, the whole matter was that very evening confided to General F—— S——; who, deeply attached to his Imperial master, at once avowed his willingness to resign his own hopes to those of the Emperor.

A tragical scene ensued; the lady wept bitterly, and the gentleman uttered the most ardent vows of unalterable affection—each, of course, yielded only to dire necessity—but yield they both did; and it was amicably arranged between them that they should get up a serious quarrel, which they were carefully to make known to their respective friends.

Satisfied by the obedience of his wife, M. P—— next communicated to her the gratifying fact that the Marshal-duke de R—— had received a confidential mission to effect her presentation at court, the object of her constant longing—that brilliant court of which she had never hitherto obtained a glimpse, save as she saw the glittering procession pass along the street on some public festival.

Just at this period an order from the Emperor compelled the marshal to proceed with all speed to Spain; and although he regretted the gaieties of Paris, he was by no means sorry to extricate himself in so honorable a manner from the probable effects of his very hazardous hoax.

Matters by no means remained stationary, however ; as M. P——, disconcerted by the precipitate departure of his obliging and zealous friend, and impatient to clutch the golden prize which had so long evaded his grasp, determined to make a bold effort to terminate the adventure himself, by requesting that the Grand-Marshal of the palace would solicit for him an audience of the Emperor. After considerable hesitation this was accorded ; and the banker found himself in the cabinet of His Majesty.

“What do you desire to ask of me, Monsieur ?” inquired Napoleon with his usual gravity.

“Sire, I was anxious to have the honor to remind Your Imperial Majesty of the petition which the Marshal-duke de R—— had the goodness to present to you in my name.”

“I remember ;” said Napoleon curtly ; “you wished for an appointment in my household. It is impossible ; there is not one vacant.”

“Your Imperial and Royal Majesty led me to anticipate the high honor of holding the office of Treasurer of the Crown.”

“It is not vacant, I repeat ; and I am perfectly satisfied with the present functionary.”

“Ah, Sire, my wife will be in despair when she learns that her hopes are at an end.”

“I regret to hear it.”

“She has so great a respect for our illustrious Emperor.”

“I am very grateful for her good opinion.”

“And, Sire, since it is my duty to avow it to you, she is so devotedly attached to your person—”

“M. P—— ;” said Napoleon sternly ; “while I am

on the throne of France, public appointments and offices shall never be the reward of what you evidently mean me to understand. You are bold, Monsieur, and ill-advised to offer such a bribe to your sovereign."

"And yet, Sire, the Marshal-duke told me—"

"Told you? What did he tell you? Speak out, Monsieur, and that instantly."

The irritated tone and burning eye of the Emperor intimidated the poor husband; who, however, amid all his agitation, contrived to stammer forth his not very creditable tale.

"Go, Monsieur; go;" was the indignant exclamation of Napoleon at its conclusion; "and request of the Marshal of the Palace to confer on you the office of keeper of his savings'-chest." And as he spoke he turned his back upon the disconcerted petitioner.

The rage and astonishment of the mystified and bewildered banker may be imagined, as he flung himself into his carriage and returned home, where he bitterly upbraided his wife; who retorted that, thenceforward, he would have no right to complain of her infidelity should she think proper to accept a lover, after his having voluntarily suggested such a measure himself. The argument was one much too valid to be readily confuted; and at length peace was proclaimed between the mortified couple, on condition that neither should again revert to the subject.

Some time subsequently the Emperor said with a smile to General F—— S—— :

"I owe you many acknowledgments, M. le Comte; for I have become aware that you who never retreated before the enemy, did not scruple to do so before me.

It was a proof of respect by which I was sincerely gratified; and of which I fear that, had our respective positions been reversed, I should scarcely have been capable myself."

"That, Sire, is because you were never meant to be my subject."

"You are right, General," was the rejoinder of Napoleon; "it was predestined from all eternity that I should command; and that you should pursue the career of glory in which you so bravely maintain your reputation."

This reply enchanted M. F—— S——, who was aware that it would be followed up by a more substantial demonstration of the Emperor's satisfaction; nor were his anticipations erroneous; as, some time subsequently, an important office at court becoming vacant, the surprise was universal when, despite the claims and services of many of those who applied for it, as well as the powerful recommendations by which those applications were supported, the appointment was conferred on General F—— S——, who had no single claim to advance, and no influential interest to which to appeal in his behalf; but as he had wit enough never to reveal the adventure of Madame P——, he enjoyed his new honors, careless of the jealous comments of his less fortunate competitors; and perfectly ready to perform a similar act of self-abnegation whenever the Imperial caprice should furnish him with an opportunity; for it is needless to say that Napoleon did not consider it necessary to inform him that in the retreat to which he had alluded, he had served him only in intention, and not in fact.

CHAPTER XXV.

A PARISIAN SALOON UNDER THE EMPIRE.

Nothing could be more incongruous than the society of Paris under the empire; for while a few ladies, such as the Princess de Vandemont, and the Marquise de Montesson, Madame de Genlis, and Madame du Deffant (the illustrious but impoverished friend of the President Hénault and Horace Walpole), the Duchesses de Luynes, de Montmorency, de Brissac, &c., &c., received in their saloons all the national and foreign celebrities who chanced to be domiciliated in the capital, there were other women of high rank who were much less scrupulous as regarded the characters and antecedents of their admitted guests. Among these the most prominent was the Comtesse de Livry, who, in point of fact, was a salaried agent of one of the public hells. In her splendidly-decorated rooms, scores of wretched dupes were taught to curse the hour when they had first, inexperienced young men, misled by the empty sound of a noble name, believed themselves welcomed to the best society, and had allowed their vanity to prove too strong for their reason.

Eager to emulate the ostentatious recklessness of wealthier votaries at this shrine of vice than themselves, they flung upon that fatal green cloth almost the whole of their fortunes, in order to dazzle for a few brief

moments the eyes of some beautiful but frail woman, who was unworthy of the sacrifice ; and the result was their own ruin. Nor was their danger lessened by the fact, that among the *habitués* of Madame de Livry were many men of birth and station, who went to her house with much the same feeling that they would have gone behind the scenes of an opera, or into a school of anatomy. To these the passions of the young and the unwary were merely a study—it was a singular page of human nature which it amused them to read—and, meanwhile, the very fact of their presence in such a scene, and the sanction which it afforded to other individuals of less pretension, while it added to the gains of the high-priestess of the temple, rendered the altar itself more and more perilous to its worshippers.

We will not enter more deeply into its mysteries ; let it suffice that the police were bribed to abstain from all interference ; and that excesses which would have been punished by imprisonment, and even in some cases by the galleys, in less aristocratic establishments, were suffered to pass without comment. As masked entertainments were occasionally given, an Imperial chamberlain was sometimes elbowed by a valet dressed in the clothes of his master, while on all sides were to be seen women in gorgeous attire, whose very names had never been whispered in respectable circles.

On one occasion, a man of rank, weary of the monotony of the great world, determined to gratify his curiosity by attending one of these masquerades, and he accordingly proceeded to the hôtel of Madame de Livry, where he amused himself by lounging through the rooms and loitering at the several gaming-tables.

He was thus engaged when he was accosted by a young and elegant-looking female, closely masked, and magnificently attired; who, after having remained in conversation with him for a short time, turned in another direction, and disappeared in the crowd. It chanced that the nobleman in question possessed a *bonbonnière* of rock-crystal which he very highly valued, not on account of its intrinsic worth, which did not exceed fourteen or fifteen louis, but because the lid was formed of a medallion containing a cypher made of the hair of his father, who had fallen a victim to the Revolution.

Having occasion to make use of the box a few minutes afterwards, he discovered to his extreme annoyance that it also had disappeared; and, feeling convinced that it had passed out of his own possession into that of his late companion, he began to look anxiously about him to obtain a glimpse of her. The attempt, however, proved vain; and satisfied that she had either left the house or covered herself with a domino, he was compelled to abandon all hope of recovering so valuable a family relic.

While grieving over his loss, his eye suddenly fell upon Madame de Livry, who was talking earnestly to a man who wore not only a mask, but a most extraordinary costume; and careless of intruding upon their conversation under the circumstances, he at once joined her, and related what had just happened to him, adding that the loss of the trinket would not have troubled him for a moment, had it not been for the regret that he felt at the loss of his unfortunate father's hair. He moreover assured her of his conviction that the box would not fetch more than thirty francs in the event of

its being disposed of to a stranger, while he was ready to give a hundred to any one who would restore it to himself; as, in addition to the peculiar value which he individually attached to it, the box had been given to one of his ancestors by the great Condé.

Madame de Livry, indignant at the inference contained in this insinuation, haughtily replied that persons frequently complained of being robbed, when, in point of fact, they had lost the missing article through their own carelessness; and concluded by declaring that in all probability he had let the toy fall, and would, at the close of the night, find it trampled to pieces on the floor.

Considering all further expostulation useless, M. de — returned to his hôtel, angry with himself, and cursing the whim which had induced him to enter such a den of thieves. Finding it impossible to sleep, the daylight had no sooner penetrated into his chamber than he rose from his bed, and had just sat down to his desk to write an advertisement for the papers, when one of his valets entered to announce that M. Fossard desired to see him.

“Fossard?” he echoed; “Fossard? Who is M. Fossard? I do not know him. Say that I have not yet returned home.”

The denial was useless; the visitor was aware that M. le Marquis had entered his hôtel an hour after midnight, and his business was urgent.

After some demur the unknown visitor was admitted, and proved to be a man of about fifty, stoutly built, and with a countenance strongly expressive of self-possession and courage. His eye was bright, restless, and

searching ; and the curl of his lip at once sarcastic and sardonic ; but his greatest peculiarity was his hands, which, as he withdrew his gloves on entering, instantly attracted the attention of his host ; they were small, with fingers long and slight as those of a woman, but nevertheless dry and muscular, betraying great strength. Altogether there was some thing about him that riveted the attention of the marquis, although he could only suppose that he came to solicit assistance, either for himself or for some public charity. But the longer he looked at him the more he was impressed by the idea that the intruder was no common supplicant ; there was nothing, as he at once saw, either threatening or ferocious about him, although there was much both extraordinary and repelling.

He was dressed not only with care, but even with a certain elegance, and carried a sword-stick with a massive gold head. As a servant placed a chair, he thanked him courteously, but did not attempt to seat himself ; and when the door closed the marquis and his visitor were standing opposite to each other with the breakfast-table between them.

The stranger no sooner found himself alone with M. de — than he placed his hat upon the offered chair, and quietly withdrawing a brace of pistols from his bosom, laid them beside it.

“What is the meaning of this?” inquired the marquis.

“Nothing whatever, Monsieur—nothing whatever” —was the calm reply.

“Who are you?” was the next inquiry.

“M. le Marquis;” answered the intruder, with one

of his equivocal smiles; "I thought I had desired that I should be properly announced to you. I am Fossard."

"You must excuse me;" said the mystified noble; "but that name is quite unknown to me."

"It is, however, tolerably familiar to most persons;" retorted his companion; "you may perhaps remember the famous robbery of the Imperial wardrobe—I was the perpetrator of it."

"What!" exclaimed the marquis; "do you come to denounce yourself as a thief?"

"Call me what you will, I am Fossard; and you must consequently excuse the precautions that I have taken."

"But what do you want with me?" impatiently demanded his interlocutor; "for I solemnly assure you that I will neither suffer myself to be robbed nor murdered."

"I beg you to believe, M. le Marquis, that I came here with no intention of the sort;" he replied with the utmost composure; "I never annoy in any way those with whom I have the honor to associate; and yesterday, as you may perhaps remember, we passed a very agreeable evening together."

"We passed an evening together!" exclaimed his astonished visitor.

"Even so, Monsieur, at the house of our mutual friend Madame de Livry."

"Ah, indeed! Is the countess a friend of yours? And does she know you as you have yourself just enabled *me* to do?" asked the marquis, unable to restrain a smile.

“Not exactly;” was the laughing rejoinder; “for I not only change my costume, but even my face, when it is convenient to me to do so. Last night, when you informed her of your loss, I was the domino who was conversing with her. I attended her entertainment in order to overlook my agents; I really regretted the annoyance to which you had been subjected; and I overheard your generous promise to give a hundred francs to the person who should restore to you the missing box—Here it is!”

As he spoke, he held it towards his host, who immediately took out his purse, and offered to him the stipulated sum.

The effect of the man’s reckless daring was so extraordinary, that, strange to say, it possessed a fascination which rendered the marquis by no means inclined to hasten his departure; but that which ensued caused him still greater astonishment. When the five Napoleons were put into his hand, he drew a very well-filled purse from his pocket, into which he dropped three only, and then laying the two others on the table, and placing ten francs beside them, he said, in a business-like tone:—

“M. le Marquis, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, I decline to accept anything for myself; but I am compelled to retain fifty francs, as I must throw thirty into the common stock; and Clara has a right to demand the twenty which remain.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the Marquis, “I now begin to understand the whole transaction. Clara! Was she not the pretty columbine of last night, whose fingers were as nimble as her eyes were bright?”

"Precisely, M. le Marquis; and a marvellous creature she is!" replied his visitor enthusiastically; "young, pretty, clever, and as cunning as a monkey, or a prime-minister."

"M. Fossard;" said the marquis; "be you who you may, I sincerely thank you for having restored to me a trinket to which I am greatly attached; but I must insist that you allow me to force upon you the promised reward. The money is yours, and I request that you will receive it."

"I am distressed to disobey your lordship;" smiled the eccentric robber; "but such an imposition would be unworthy of me after I have had the honor of passing an evening in your society."

"I must insist, Monsieur, that you accept what I have offered;" said the marquis haughtily.

"So be it then;" was the reply; and taking the fifty francs into his hand, the visitor replaced the pistols in the crown of his hat, and prepared to retire; but, before he left the room, he laid the money down on a console near the door, and said respectfully:—

"Monsieur, I must entreat you to do me a favor, and to distribute this small sum to the poor. I shall esteem it an obligation for which I will at once convince you of my gratitude. Know, then, that your house-porter is in my pay, and that he is at the same time attached to the police. Do not let him guess that you are aware of this; it could answer no good purpose, as he will this very day receive from me an order to quit your service."

Perfectly bewildered, the marquis accompanied his equivocal guest as far as the antechamber; and

the door of communication was no sooner opened than the latter exclaimed, in an accent of light-hearted familiarity, in the hearing of the attendants:—

“Good morning, M. le Marquis; make my compliments, if you please, to Madame de Livry, should you see her before I do so.”

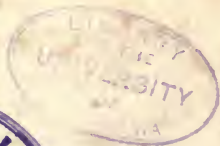
Two hours after the departure of Fossard, the house-porter requested an interview with his master, in order to inform him that he had just received intelligence of the dangerous illness of his father, who was anxious to see him before he died; and after expressing his sorrow at the necessity which compelled him to resign so excellent a situation, he proceeded to recommend to the favor of the marquis a particular friend of his own, who was anxious to become his successor.

As a matter of course the offer was declined.

“Well, Monsieur le Marquis;” whispered the Comtesse de Livry from an adjoining box, as the individual she addressed was in the act of offering a lozenge to an asthmatic duchess at the Théâtre Français from the rescued *bonbonnière*; “did I not tell you that your pretty toy had only fallen?”

“You did, Madame, and you were right;” was the ready reply; “it had fallen into bad hands.”

THE END.





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